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Dissertation

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

by

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PREFACE

The choice of this thesis project is the result of a desire and a conviction, both of which seemed to demand attention and to clamor for expression.

The desire, in turn, arises from a felt need. Since my conversion at the age of fifteen I have been associated with Christian people who stress entire sanctification as "a second definite work of grace;" i.e., as a second crisis in Christian experience, coming after conversion. I have heard scores of sermons and have read many books in explanation and defence of this doctrine. I have taken special interest in writings of John Wesley, who was the greatest exponent of this teaching in modern times, and who may rightly be called the father of the diversified organizations that subscribed to the doctrine. Almost all of the so-called holiness groups of our day, including the Salvation Army, sprang directly out of Methodism.

But I have come more and more to feel one element of dissatisfaction with much that I have read and heard on the subject. This has been due to the presence of such a large amount of faulty exegesis. Just to give one example; the question of Paul to the Ephesian disciples, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" has been a favorite with many ill-informed holiness preachers. Of course, the difficulty here lies in a literal adherence to the wording of the King James version, without reference to the Greek

text. Obviously the participle in the Greek does not "prove" that the reception of the Spirit is subsequent to conversion.

This is perhaps one of the most glaring errors and one which is perpetrated only by uneducated men. But I have found that many of the widely-used proof-texts for a second work of grace do not prove that idea conclusively at all, when a careful exegesis is made of them.

All of this has created a desire to make a careful and independent investigation of just what the Greek New Testament does teach on the subject of sanctification. This desire has been increased by the fact that I have not found to date any satisfactory exegetical treatment of the subject.

This does not mean that there have not been any scholars among those who teach the Wesleyan doctrine. John Wesley himself was a careful student of the Greek New Testament, had his M.A. from Oxford University, and was a lecturer there. Few preachers of today in this country are as much at home in the Greek New Testament as was John Wesley. The late Professor Cell of Boston University is authority for the statement that for twenty years Wesley used no text but his Greek Testament for both study and preaching purposes.

Again Dr. Adam Clarke, the great Methodist commentator, and a contemporary of Wesley, was one of the outstanding linguistic scholars of his day. He made free use not only

of the Greek and Hebrew, but also of Arabic. His six-volume commentary on the Bible is still widely used by preachers of all evangelical denominations. In this work he maintains the doctrine of entire sanctification as a second crisis experience.

There have been many scholarly exponents of this teaching in more recent times, but I mention only one. Dr. Daniel Steele, who was for many years professor of Greek New Testament in Boston University School of Theology, wrote a number of books in support of this doctrine. But in none of them does he give a clear and complete exegetical treatment of the entire New Testament teaching on the subject.

There have been several books written on the subject by those not in sympathy with the Wesleyan interpretation. But none of them comes to grips with the exact teaching of the New Testament on this point. Most of the works, pro and con, seem to treat the matter more from the standpoint of logic and human experience than from a careful and scientific exegesis of the New Testament. That there is a dearth of anything satisfactory along this line is indicated by the following statement, made by Harris F. Rall in his article "Sanctification", in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. He says: "The popular and special works are usually too indiscriminating and unhistorical to be of value for the Biblical study."¹ The purpose of this thesis

¹ ISBE, IV, 2685.

is to attempt to meet this need.

I have spoken also of a conviction. It is this. I feel that the Protestant church at large has been guilty of an unjustifiable and most unfortunate neglect of this important phase of Christian teaching. The mere fact that some have made a hobby of it and many have brought reproach to the term "holiness" does not seem to me sufficient reason for ignoring something that is central to the whole thought of Scripture. The highest conception that we can have of God is His holiness. Paul's favorite term for believers is "saints," or "holy ones." The adjective ~~holy~~ *agios* is used some 230 times in the New Testament. About half of that number of times it is used as a substantive and is translated "saints." Certainly no one could deny the centrality of the idea of holiness in the New Testament. A holy God designs to make men holy in order that they may fellowship fully with Him. That seems to me the goal of the whole Christian religion.

The age in which we live has frequently been termed the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. And yet little attention has been paid by the church at large to the ministry of the Spirit. Recently in a class of graduate theological students at Temple University the professor asked how many had preached on the Holy Spirit during the past year. Out of the class of forty-three young ministers not a hand was raised. When the professor queried further as to how many

had used that subject during the previous five years he received the same response. And yet the Holy Spirit is mentioned some 240 times in the New Testament. It seems to me that such facts as these help to explain the much lamented weakness of the Christian church today. We are faced with a poverty both in richness of Christian experience and in dynamic in the Christian ministry.

It has always impressed me that such powerful and saintly Christian leaders as A. J. Gordon, A.B. Simpson, and Andrew Murray -- incidentally, all of these were great leaders in the field of world evangelism -- gave much attention to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and wrote books on that theme. My conviction is that we need more of their type of piety and of vision in the church right now.

The need for a treatise on this subject will become apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to investigate the field of written theology. Hardly any of the systematic theologies give any space at all to the subject. In some a paragraph or two in small print will be found. I did not find the word "sanctification," or a derivative of it, in the table of contents of any New Testament theology. It must be confessed that the subject is one that has been very largely passed over in silence by the theologians. One cannot help wondering if the almost universal ignoring of this theme is due to an ignorance of it.

Of late there has been an increasing interest in the

subject on the part of many Christians of different communions. The great interdenominational Keswick movement of England, headed by such men as F. B. Meyer and H. C. G. Moule, is testimony to this fact. R. H. Coats, in his article "Sanctification" in Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, has this to say:

At the present day there is evidence of a revived interest in the more experimental aspects of Christian holiness. The increase in the number of clerical and lay retreats, prayer circles, fellowships of silence, conventions for the deepening of spiritual life, and the like, shows that the subject of personal sanctification is again taking possession of men's minds.²

The purpose of this thesis is not to try to prove any theory of sanctification. I shall endeavor to seek honestly and state frankly what the Greek New Testament has to say on this subject. My only desire is to know the truth, convinced that the truth alone can make us free.

There are two main questions that confront one in such a search. The first is "What does the New Testament say regarding this?" The second is "What does the New Testament mean by such and such a statement?" The first is the problem of textual criticism, and the second that of Biblical interpretation. I shall try to observe carefully the accepted rules in both fields and to make a careful, impartial, scientific investigation of the subject under consideration.

²ERE, XI, 184.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DOCTRINE IN HISTORY

The history of the doctrine of sanctification in the church is a difficult subject to handle in a short space. None of the standard works on the history of Christian doctrine gives real attention to this subject. "It has no place in Histories of Doctrine generally."¹ Dr. Platt, in his article on "Perfection (Christian)" in ERE, states that Pope's Compendium of Christian Theology gives "the best historical summary of Christian perfection."² But we are discussing sanctification here, not Christian perfection as one theory of it. The same objection holds good against Dr. Platt's article just referred to, as well as against Dr. Flew's scholarly volume on The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology. There does not appear to be any monograph dealing specifically with the history of the doctrine of sanctification, and the articles on the subject

¹Pope, CCT, III, 61. The truth of this statement will become readily apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to investigate the matter. Fisher, Harnack (7 vol.) and Shedd (2 vol.) do not even list the term "sanctification" in their indexes. While the word is found there in Dorner, Hagenbach, and Seeberg (each 2 vol.), yet the references are to scattered statements in the text and in the case of Seeberg to bare occurrences of the word, without any discussions of the doctrine. Sheldon, who was Methodist, is the only one who really treats the doctrine as such, and he devotes less than four pages to it altogether in his three references to it in connection with Luther--Calvin, the Quakers, and the Methodists.

²ERE, IX, 737.

are very brief. But some of the outstanding peaks in the history of the doctrine will be noted.

1. Augustine. Augustine was the first to formulate a definite theory on the subject. In order to understand his position we must remember that he was in strong opposition to Pelagianism. Now, Pelagius stressed the natural goodness of man to such an extent that it was not difficult for him to postulate the possibility of perfection in this life. He did not believe in original sin, hence there was no sinful propensity in man to hinder him from attaining to the ideal Christian life.

The grace of God was original in human nature and perfection was its instinctive quest and attainable goal; grace merely enabled the recipient to reach it more easily.

Obviously perfection of this type is naturalistic rather than distinctively Christian; it was on this account condemned at the Council of Carthage (A. D. 418). ³

With this judgment of Pelagius' teachings, Pope agrees.

He says: following citation, 182.

Hence Pelagius boldly asserted that through the use of their natural faculties, and the natural means of grace, men might attain unto a state of perfect conformity with the law of God, Who prescribes nothing impossible. But his denial of original sin, and of the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost applying its provision of the Atonement, robbed his theory of entire sanctification of any essentially Christian character. ⁴

³Frederic Platt, in ERE, IX, 733.

⁴Pope, CCT, III, 70.

It is natural that Augustine in his opposition to Pelagius and in his strong emphasis on original sin and free grace should deny the essential position of Pelagian thought on this subject. For Augustine the grace of God was everything; human effort counted for nothing.

The natural implication of Augustine's theory of the sovereign grace of God would be that perfection would be possible to the Christian in this life. If God's grace is irresistible, what is to hinder it from perfecting the work of sanctification in the believer's life? But, "Hesitation in accepting the full implications of his doctrine of grace is a marked feature of his teaching."⁵

Augustine in theory allowed for the possibility of perfect sanctification in this life through the special operation of supernatural irresistible grace; but he somewhat weakened the admission by affirming that, by the judicial act of God, such entire sanctification had never been achieved.⁶

That such was the teaching of Augustine is evident from the following quotation, taken from his treatise "On the Spirit and the Letter", addressed to Marcellinus. It seems that the latter had been surprised at a statement in one of Augustine's writings to the effect that a man might

⁵Platt, in ERE, IX, 733.

⁶R. H. Coats, Article "Sanctification" in ERE, XI, 182.

continue without sin in this life. In answer, Augustine wrote:

See how an instance of perfect righteousness is unexampled among men, and yet it is not impossible. For it might be achieved if there were only applied so much of will as suffices for so great a thing.....and that this is not realized, is not owing to any intrinsic impossibility, but to God's judicial act.⁷

2. Medieval Catholic Teaching. Thomas Aquinas developed still further the ideas of Augustine on this subject.

"Of all the theologians St. Thomas is most dominated by the thought of the ultimate perfection of mankind.⁸

As would be expected, Aquinas stressed the sacraments as the vehicles through which the sanctifying grace of God reaches the faithful believer. This sanctifying grace comes from Christ's merit and is at the disposal of the church. The teachings of Aquinas became the theology of the Roman church very largely and were made law by the Council of Trent. Its canons on this point may be summed up as follows:

According to Roman Catholic teaching, there is no particular sin which may not be wholly overcome by sanctifying grace, and no commandments of God which are impossible to the justified; but the perfect eradication of all sin in this earthly life implies such a special infusion of assisting grace that it cannot be predicated of anyone save of the Blessed Virgin.⁹

⁷Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, V, 112.

⁸Flew, PCT, 225.

⁹Coats, in ERE, XI, 182.

3. REFORMATION DOCTRINE

a. Calvin. The position of Calvin is so clearly defined that we notice it first. He was opposed definitely to any idea of perfection in this life. After quoting Paul's prayer for the perfection of believers, in I Thess. 3:13, he says:

These words were strongly urged by the Celestines of old in maintaining the perfection of holiness in the present life. To this we deem it sufficient to reply, with Augustine, that the goal to which all the pious ought to aspire is to appear in the presence of God without spot and blemish; but as the course of the present life is at best nothing more than progress, we shall never reach the goal until we have laid aside the body of sin, and been completely united to the Lord. If anyone chooses to give the name of perfection to the Saints, I shall not obstinately quarrel with him provided he defines this perfection in the words of Augustine, "When we speak of the perfect virtue of the saints, part of this perfection consists in the recognition of our imperfection both in truth and in humility."¹⁰

Two observations might be made on this statement of Calvin's. The first is his obvious and acknowledged dependence on Augustine, who was practically his last court of appeal as well as main guide in thinking. The second is his use of the expression "body of sin". He seems to make this refer to the human, physical body. It seems to me that this is very questionable exegesis.

¹⁰Institutes, II, 412.

b. Luther. The teaching of Luther on the subject is rather more difficult to state with definiteness. He was not the systematic thinker and writer that Calvin was. The late Dr. George Crofts Cell, of Boston University, used to say that while Calvin was a "systematist", Luther was a "fragmentist". He preferred the latter type.

The consequence of this lack of system - Luther never composed any systematic theology like Calvin's Institutes - is that there are seeming contradictions in Luther's writings. He spoke and wrote as he thought and his thoughts were constantly progressing. He seems at times to teach that perfection is a state possible in this life. At other times he denies this.

It is interesting to find the phrase "Christian perfection" in the Augsburg Confession. It occurs in a passage which is attributed to Luther himself by Lindsay, one of the leading authorities on the Lutheran Reformation. The statement runs thus:

Christian perfection is this, to fear God sincerely; and again, to conceive great faith, and to trust assuredly that God is pacified towards us for Christ's sake; to ask, and certainly to look for, help from God in all our affairs according to our calling; and outwardly to do good works diligently, and to attend to our vocation. In these things doth true perfection and the true worship of God consist; it doth not consist in being unmarried, in going about begging, nor in wearing dirty clothes.¹¹

¹¹Lindsay, HR, I, 367.

But it is an unquestionable fact that in general Luther taught that perfection was unattainable in this life. The main concern of Luther was with justification, not with sanctification. The German church historian, Harnack, charges the Lutheran movement with a deficiency on this point. He says:

Through having the resolute wish to go back to religion and to it alone, (the Lutheran Church) neglected far too much the moral problem, the Be ye holy, for I am holy.¹²

So, while on the one hand Luther declared that "the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin"¹³; yet, on the other hand, he taught the doctrine of progress in place of the possibility of present deliverance from sin.¹⁴

4. PIETISTS AND QUAKERS

a. Pietists. In the two centuries immediately following the Reformation there was some progress in the field of personal sanctification made by the Pietists of Germany and the Quakers of England. Pietism arose as a reaction against the formality and cold orthodoxy of the Lutheran Church. Perhaps we might say more accurately that it arose in response to a heart hunger for experiential religion which was not met by that church. "Its impulse came from the desire for personal holiness."¹⁵

¹²Harnack, HD, VII, 267.

¹³Wace and Buchheim, Luther's Primary Works, 265.

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Flew, PCT, 276, 277

Spener was the founder of this movement. He had a strong passion for practical holiness and organized the seekers after holiness into collegia pietatis. The emphasis among his followers was on devotion rather than on doctrine.

Francke, of Halle, became perhaps the greatest exponent and exemplar of this seventeenth century "holiness movement". In his essay on The Perfection of a Christian he taught that there were three stages in the progress toward the goal - childhood, youth, and manhood. "He did not claim that sinlessness was a mark of maturity."¹⁶ But he taught that the way to perfection was through prayer. There was a strong mystical element in this movement, but definite theological statement was lacking.

b. Quakers. The Quakers are often thought of mainly as stressing the non-use of ordinances. But the central thing in Quakerism was the emphasis on the immediate guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit. It approached the nearest to the Wesleyan teaching on entire sanctification of any movement before Wesley's time. That is perfectly obvious to one who has been associated with both Quaker and Wesleyan groups. But the fact is not commonly known to outsiders, and it is a little startling to read a statement by Dr. Flew (of Cambridge) to that effect.

¹⁶PCT, 281, 282

He says:

On the other hand, in religious and ethical insight, George Fox went far deeper than the Reformers, and he did so precisely in virtue of his teaching on perfection. The holiness which he taught was not imputed but real. The Quaker doctrine has this distinction among all the types of teaching from the third century to the eighteenth, that it returned wholeheartedly to the attitude of the New Testament.¹⁷

The main attempt--almost the only one-- on the part of any Quaker to compose a systematic theology is found in An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, by Robert Barclay, a Scotch theologian. The work is prefaced by a letter to King Charles II, dated November 25, 1675.

One section of the book deals with the subject of perfection. It is a defence of the proposition that sinless perfection is possible in this life. It begins with this statement:

In whom this pure and holy birth is fully brought forth, the body of death and sin comes to be crucified and removed, and their hearts united and subjected to the truth; so as not to obey any suggestions or temptations of the evil one, but to be free from actual sinning and transgressing of the law of God, and in that respect perfect; yet doth this perfection still admit of a growth; and there remaineth always in some part a possibility of sinning, where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord.¹⁸

Neither Barclay in his Apology nor Fox in his Journal gives any clear teaching on a second crisis in Christian experience, as does Wesley.

¹⁷Flew, PCT, 281, 282

¹⁸Barclay, Apology, 229.

5. John Wesley. It has already been suggested that John Wesley is the "father" of the many modern movements which are generally defined as "holiness". Hence it will be necessary to ascertain rather carefully just what he taught on the subject of sanctification. Fortunately, we are not left in any doubt on the subject, for Wesley himself has left us a summary of his teaching in his treatise entitled, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as believed and taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725, to the year 1777."

Wesley began quite early in his ministry, to use the term "perfection" and thereby incurred considerable opposition. One of his opponents was Bishop Gibson. Wesley recounts a meeting with him.

I think it was in the latter end of the year 1740, that I had a conversation with Dr. Gibson, then Bishop of London, at Whitehall. He asked me what I meant by perfection. I told him without any disguise or reserve. When I ceased speaking, he said, "Mr. Wesley, if this be all you mean, publish it to all the world. If anyone then can confute what you say, he may have free leave". I answered, "My Lord, I will"; and accordingly wrote and published the sermon on Christian perfection.¹⁹

The sermon is divided into two parts:

1. In what sense Christians are not perfect.
2. In what sense Christians are perfect.

It has been said that Wesley spent more time stating what Christian perfection was not than in explaining what it was. I do not think that this statement is true to the facts, but it is noticeable that he gave much attention to defend-

¹⁹Works, XI, 374

ing the doctrine against erroneous views of it.

Wesley stated that Christians are not perfect in knowledge, nor free from infirmities, nor absolutely perfect. On the positive side his conclusion is: "A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin."²⁰

Later on he stated his position rather more fully. He says that he and his brother had maintained:

1. That Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbor, which implies deliverance from all sin.
2. That this is received merely by faith.
3. That it is given instantaneously, in one moment.
4. That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment.²¹

It is readily apparent that two problems project themselves into the thinking of the reader of these lines. The first is the question of "sinless perfection", and the second is that of "instantaneous sanctification". We shall take these up more carefully, to ascertain Wesley's exact position.

With regard to the former, the problem hinges on the definition of sin. Wesley recognized this. So he writes:

1. Not only sin, properly so called, (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law,) but sin, improperly so called, (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown) needs the atoning blood.

²⁰Works, XI, 376.

²¹Works, XI, 393.

2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality.
3. Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself.
4. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions.
5. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not.²²

This is not the place to argue the question as to whether Wesley was correct or not in his definition of sin. But, his definition would seem to allow the possibility of sinlessness in this life. Doubtless most mature, consecrated Christians would testify to the absence of any "voluntary transgression of a known law".

In 1764 after mature deliberation, Wesley wrote: "Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is 'salvation from sin!'"²³

With regard to the question of instantaneousness, Wesley has a statement definitely in answer. He says:

- Q. Is this death to sin, and renewal in love, gradual or instantaneous?
- A. A man may be dying for some time; yet he does not, properly speaking, die, till the instant the soul is separated from the body..
 ...In like manner, he may be dying to sin for some time; yet he is not dead to sin, till sin is separated from his soul, and in that instant he lives the full life of love.²⁴

²²Works, XI, 396

²³Ibid., XI, 442.

²⁴Ibid., XI, 402.

But Wesley emphasized a gradual work of sanctification, before and after the crisis experience. He wrote in 1767, when sixty-four years of age:

I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant. But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.²⁵

It is obvious that Wesley believed in a perfection in holiness in this life. His favorite expression for it was "perfect love". I think it will be apparent that many extreme statements about Wesley's views would be found unjustifiable if his own words were carefully weighed.

6. THE MODERN HOLINESS MOVEMENT

About 1875, many of the leaders of the Methodist Church began to discount the Wesleyan teaching of entire sanctification. In 1895, when Dr. P. F. Bresee organized the first Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles, California, the bishops of Methodist Church were divided over the issue. By that time, there were a number of groups in about every section of this country that were seeking to revive the Wesleyan emphasis on "Scriptural holiness".

The Church of the Nazarene is by far the largest denomination in the United States today that subscribes to the Wesleyan interpretation of sanctification. It now has a membership of 150,000 here, besides many thousands more

²⁵Works, XI, 446.

in the British Isles and mission fields. So we shall quote from its official statement on the subject of "entire sanctification". The following is taken from the "Articles of Faith" in the 1936 Manual.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.

Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration, and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.²⁶

There are other organized holiness denominations, such as the Free Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, Reformed Baptist, and Pilgrim Holiness. All of these have much the same doctrinal statements as that just quoted. But none of these five mentioned are "Pentecostal" (tongues), nor do any of them allow any so-called "holy rollerism". They are all definitely committed to the Wesleyan interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of sanctification.

7. SUMMARY

We have traced the history of this doctrine from the time of Augustine to the present. We have found that

²⁶Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 29.

Augustine himself saw no inherent impossibility of perfect sanctification in this life. But he felt that no example of such a state of grace had appeared in human history. Therefore, he decided that God had by a "judicial act" ruled out the possibility of such an experience. Pelagius had strong faith in man's natural goodness and so saw no hindrance to attaining the goal of perfection.

Medieval catholic theology, based immediately on Aquinas and ultimately on Augustine, stressed the human factor in sanctification. The grace of God for this was mediated through the sacraments.

Calvin was sure that perfection was impossible in this life. Luther generally taught the same, although two or three statements in his writings certainly sound like an endorsement of the idea of Christian perfection in the present life. But sanctification was a secondary interest in the thinking of the Reformers.

The Pietists and Quakers both gave strong emphasis to practical piety and ethical holiness. The former were more mystical than theological. George Fox did not define his doctrines with very great clearness, but he gave a large place to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and to His sanctifying grace in the heart.

John Wesley was the first to emphasize definitely and clearly the doctrine of entire sanctification as a crisis experience. With him, for the first time in Christian history

it appears, sanctification was a central interest. He believed in deliverance from all sin and taught that sanctification was both instantaneous and gradual.

The modern holiness movement in this country built definitely on the foundation laid by Wesley. But the doctrinal statements have become more fixed and stereotyped. It will be noticed that the conditions of being sanctified--full consecration and faith--are stated definitely today. This is due partly to a technique of method.

CHAPTER TWO

SANCTIFICATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

The origin of the Hebrew word q̄d̄š, to be holy, still lies in the mists of obscurity. The term with its derivations, is found only in religious literature, so that the meaning of the root is not certain. Its earliest usage would appear to give it the idea of "separation", or "cutting off".

Because of the uncertainty as to the origin of this term there is some difference of opinion as to its meaning when applied to God. But most writers agree on the essential idea of separateness. So Weidner writes:

Where kadosh (holiness) is a designation of a divine attribute, there evidently lies in it primarily a negative element, by which it designates a state of apartness, God raising Himself up above others. God's holiness is God's self-preservation, by virtue of which He remains like Himself in all relations which either are in Him or on which He enters in any way, and neither gives up any part of His divinity, nor accepts anything ungodly.¹

Skinner, in his article on "Holiness in the Old Testament", starts from the same point but carries the discussion further. He finds three main aspects of God's holiness in the Old Testament, all "derived from the fundamental sense of unapproachableness, which is never absent from the notion of Jehovah's holiness."²

¹BTDT, 72.

²HDB, II, 397.

The first of these is the positive conception of greatness, or power and majesty. "Of all uses of the word this is the most widely prevalent."²

Davidson, in his very valuable Theology of the Old Testament, comes to the same conclusion. He writes:

When applied to Jehovah, it may express any attribute in Him whereby He manifests Himself to be God, or anything about Him which is what we should name Divine; and hence the name "holy", or "holy One", became the loftiest expression for Jehovah as God, or it expressed God especially on the side of His majesty. It was the name for God as transcendental.³

The French theologian Piepenbring finds very much the same thing. He says:

Consequently holiness, when predicated of Jehovah, denotes not so much one of his peculiar attributes, as the entirety of his divine character.....The English expression that best expresses the idea of holiness in the sense of the Old Testament is divine exaltation or majesty.⁴

The second aspect that Skinner notes is one that appears in the Torah. He says that here the idea of holiness "approximates to that of physical purity". The "ruling principles of the Levitical legislation" is holiness as separation from impurity. This is the meaning of the term in the command, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."⁵

The third aspect is the ethical sense, which becomes most apparent in the prophecies. Isaiah's vision of God's

²HDB, II, 397

³TOT, 253

⁴TOT, 108

⁵Lev. 11:44.

holiness, that he received in the temple, carried with it ethical significance. That is indicated by the prophet's immediate reaction to it. He was shocked into a consciousness of his own uncleanness, as seen against the background of God's holiness.

Kohler summarizes the point thus:

The divine attribute of holiness has accordingly a double meaning. On the one hand, it indicates spiritual loftiness transcending everything sensual, which works as a purging power of indignation at evil, rebuking injustice, impurity and falsehood, and punishing transgression until it is removed from the sight of God. On the other hand, it denotes the condescending mercy of God, which, having purged the soul of wrong, wins it for the right, and which endows man with the power of perfecting himself.⁶

2. HOLINESS OF PLACES, THINGS, AND SEASONS

Of course, holy or holiness said of things cannot denote a moral attribute. It can only express a relation.⁷

This statement is obviously true. The adjective "holy" is applied very frequently in the Old Testament to Jerusalem and to the tabernacle and temple. These places are holy because they belong to God in a special sense. The inherent meaning of "holy" is "devoted to God". J. Agar Beet makes this his main thesis in his Holiness, Symbolic and Real.

It is clear, too, that holiness is related to association with deity. The inner court of the tabernacle was

⁶JT, 103

⁷Davidson, TOT, 253.

called the Holy Place, while the sanctuary itself, containing the ark and filled with God's Shekinah presence, was called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. This indicates that that is holiest which is nearest to God.

Not only was the place of worship holy, but also the instruments of worship are called holy. This is because they are set apart from everything for God's use. They were thus taken out of the realm of common things. The holy is distinguished from the profane. That which belongs to God is holy.

Certain seasons and days, including the Sabbath, are classed in the Old Testament as holy. They were set apart to God, to be used by the people for religious purposes. One of the outstanding warnings in the Old Testament is against profaning the Sabbath. This same thing came later to be one of the main emphases of the Pharisees, as is evident in the Gospel accounts.

3. HOLINESS OF MEN

At first, it seems the idea of holiness as applied to men did not involve any moral quality. For instance, in Exodus 13:2, God says: "Sanctify for Me the firstborn; it is Mine". He is simply asking that the firstborn shall be acknowledged as belonging to Him in a special way, because they were saved in Egypt. In Numbers 3:12, 13, God says that He has taken the Levites to Himself in place of the firstborn. He affirms that He sanctified for Himself the

firstborn of both man and beast. It is clear, then, that no moral quality is implied here.

The priests and Levites are called holy, as set apart for God's service. Even the whole nation of Israel is called holy,⁸ as being set apart from other nations to be God's "peculiar" people; that is, His treasured possession.

It is easy to see how there could be a transition from the idea of a person simply belonging to God and the conception that the person would partake of the character of God. Skinner suggests that, "It is probable that the ethical aspect was first introduced into the application of the term of God, and thence transferred to the holiness He requires in His worshippers."⁹

From a theological point of view, the chief interest of the Old Testament doctrine of holiness lies in this progressive spiritualizing of the idea under the influence of an expanding revelation of God.¹⁰

It is in the book of Psalms and in the prophets that the ethical idea of holiness first appears definitely and clearly. It is odd, however, that, as Beet points out, the word "sanctify" never occurs in the Psalms--a clear proof that it was not equivalent to purify, and idea which not unfrequently occurs there."¹¹

⁸Exodus 19:6.

⁹HDB, II, 398, 399.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹HSR, 31.

But the ethical idea is clear in the Psalms. Psalms 15 and 24 set forth ethical requirements for entering God's "holy place". The inference is that holiness has definite ethical implications and is not restricted to a ceremonial sense. This is in line with the Psalmist's grasp of the supremacy of spiritual worship, as seen in Psalm 51.

In the prophets the ethical surpasses the ceremonial. In fact, there does seem to be a real distinction between priestly holiness and prophetic holiness. Isaiah's vision had an ethical reaction upon him. The "minor" prophets sounded the note which Jesus emphasized so strongly later, that the spiritual and ethical is far more important than the ceremonial and ritual.

4. SUMMARY

Davidson gives a good summary of the Old Testament conception of holiness.

Thus (1) we see Holy as a designation of Jehovah; having reference to His Godhead, or to anything which was a manifestation of His Godhead. (2) We have it as used of men and things. These it describes as belonging to Jehovah, dedicated to Him, devoted or set apart to Him. Primarily, therefore, it expressed merely the relation. (3) But naturally the conception of dedication to Jehovah brought into view Jehovah's character; which reacted on the things or persons devoted to Him. Hence a two-fold filling up of the circumference of the word "holy" took place. (a) As to men devoted to Him, they must share His character, and thus the term "holy" took on a moral complexion. (b) As to things, they must be fit to be Jehovah's Hence the word took on what may be called a ceremonial or aesthetic complexion; differing little from clear, ceremonially pure.¹²

CHAPTER THREE

A STUDY OF GREEK VOCABULARY AND SYNTAX

IN RELATION TO OUR SUBJECT

It is obvious that a proper understanding of the meanings of the Greek words used in the New Testament in relation to sanctification is basic to our study of the subject. If we go astray here, we shall lose our way completely.

1. Ἅγιος, ἁγιαῖν. The Greek verb "to sanctify" is ἁγιαῖν which comes from the adjective ἅγιος, holy. This adjective is found in the New Testament no less than 229 times. In 62 of these occurrences it is used as a substantive and is translated "saint".

The primary meaning of ἅγιος is "dedicated to the gods, sacred."¹ It is rare in Attic and never in Homer.² The common classical word is ἔγιος which means "venerable, sacred", and also "pure, pure from carnality".³

Abbott-Smith gives the following treatment of ἅγιος as it is used in the New Testament.

1. Its highest application is to God himself in His purity, majesty, and glory. Hence (a) of things and places which have a claim to reverence as sacred to God; (b) of persons employed by him, as angels; prophets; apostles. 2. Applied to persons as separated to God's service: (a) of Christ; (b) of Christians. 3. In the moral sense of sharing God's purity. 4. Of pure, clean sacrifices and offerings.⁴

¹Abbott-Smith, MGL, v.s.; Liddell and Scott, GEL, v.s.

²Ibid

³Thayer, GEL, v.s.

⁴MGL, v.s. Scripture references have been omitted in the quotation, and so frequently hereafter.

Thayer translates the word in its moral sense, "pure, sinless, upright, holy."⁵ In his discussion of the use of the adjective as a substantive he says:

Just as the Israelites claimed for themselves the title *ὁ ἅγιος* because God selected them from the other nations to lead a life acceptable to him and rejoice in his favor and protection, so this appellation is very often in the N.T. transferred to Christians, as those whom God has selected *ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου*, that under the influence of the Holy Spirit they may be rendered, through holiness, partakers of salvation in the kingdom of God.⁶

The significant thing about *ἅγιος* and its derivative verb is the progression from a ritual use to an ethical meaning. J. V. Bartlet, after discussing the distinction between *ἀγιάζειν* and *ἁγιάζειν* says: "Each verb passes through a ritual stage of meaning to reach an ethical or spiritual one."⁷ Trench, in his discussion of , enters into the matter more definitely. He writes:

Its fundamental idea is separation, and, so to speak, consecration and devotion to the Service of Deity.....But the thought lies very near, that what is set apart from the world and to God, should separate itself from the world's defilements, and should share in God's purity; and in this way *ἅγιος* speedily acquires a moral significance.⁸

Moulton and Milligan note that "the adjective is common as a title of the gods in the inscriptions."⁹

⁵GEL, v.s.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Article, "Sanctification", in HDB, IV, 391.

⁸SNT, 332.

⁹VGT, in loco.

It is clear that the verb ἁγιάζω has a definite ethical connotation in the New Testament and means something more than merely "to consecrate, or set apart." This fact is recognized by almost all lexicographers. Liddell and Scott's Lexicon defines the term: "to hallow, purify, consecrate; (2) to cleanse from pollution, purify" and notes these uses in both the Septuagint and New Testament.¹⁰ Thayer follows suit.

We shall take a brief preliminary of some view of the passages in which the verb ἁγιάζω occurs in the New Testament. A more detailed study will be found in connection with the discussion of each passage in the main body of the thesis.

In Matthew 23:17, 19 Jesus speaks of the temple (ναός) sanctifying (ἁγιάζων) the gold with which its wood was overlaid, and also of the altar sanctifying (ἁγιάζον) the gift which was laid upon it. In both cases the evident meaning is that the gold and the gift are rendered sacred by the fact of their association with that which is already sacred to God. The formal, ceremonial idea of sanctification is evidenced here.

The sanctifying of Christ by the Father is stated by Jesus Himself in John 10:36 — "whom the Father sanctified (ἁγίασεν) and sent into the world". Obviously, this has no reference to purifying. It simply signifies that Jesus was set apart by the Father for a definite mission, which

¹⁰GEL, v.s..

was to be accomplished through His incarnation.

Closely related to this thought is the statement of Jesus in John 17:19 — "and on behalf of them (or, for the sake of, ὑπέρ) I sanctify (ἁγιάζω) myself." Here, again, the thought of purification is necessarily excluded. Just as the Father set Him apart for His redemptive work and sent Him into the world to accomplish it, so Christ now set Himself apart to experience willingly the passion and resurrection which lay just ahead.

In two passages in Acts (20:32 and 26:18) there occurs the expression, "inheritance among those who have been sanctified (ἁγιασμένους)." There does not seem to be anything in the context of either passage that would define the exact meaning of sanctification.

In Hebrews 9:13 there is a reference to the ceremonial act of sanctifying of the Levitical system, accomplished by the sprinkling of blood. Obviously, this ceremonial sanctification did not, of itself, produce any inward change of character. But the writer of Hebrews draws a contrast between this outward ceremony and the actual purging of our consciences by the blood of Christ. It would seem that New Testament sanctification, then, involves an inward cleansing.

There are three passages in which the verb ἁγιάζω is used simply in the sense of "hallowing." Two of them are in the so-called "Lord's Prayer".¹¹ The third is in I Peter

—¹¹Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2

3:15, where we are told, to "sanctify Christ as Lord" in our hearts. This seems to refer to a proper recognition of Christ's lordship in our lives. This idea would involve the act of full consecration, certainly, and an attitude of deep reverence for the holy character of the indwelling Christ.

A review of the use of the verb *ἁγιάζω* in the New Testament would seem to indicate that, far from being confined to the sanctifying of our hearts by the Holy Spirit, it is employed frequently with reference to the holiness of God and to our holiness as consisting primarily of a certain relationship to God. That relationship is possession, based upon consecration. The Old Testament connotation bulks large in the New Testament.

Perhaps the best summary definition is to be found in Abbott-Smith.

1. to dedicate, separate, set apart for God;
2. to purify, make conformable in character to such dedication: *forensically*, by actual sanctification of life.¹²

2. DERIVATIVE NOUNS

There are three main substantives derived from *ἅγιος*. They are *ἁγιασμός*, *ἁγιότης*, and *ἁγιασμένη*. Of the last two, both of which may be translated "holiness", *ἁγιότης* refers properly to the abstract quality, while *ἁγιασμένη* refers to the state in man resulting from *ἁγιασμός*. So states Abbott-Smith. But Bartlet says that *ἁγιασμένη* means the abstract quality, and *ἁγιότης*, "the same concretely and subjectively

¹²MGL, v. s..

conceived as a personal quality."¹³ Liddell and Scott make the terms equivalent. Thayer does not discuss their relation to each other.

Of the three terms noted above, *ἁγιασμός* alone may properly be translated "sanctification". It is equivalent to *τὸ ἁγιάζειν*.¹⁴ Abbott-Smith says: "As an active verbal noun in *-μός*, it signifies properly the process *τὸ ἁγιάζειν*, rather than the resultant state, *ἁγιασμένην*."¹⁵ He thinks that it has this proper grammatical sense in eight out of ten passages where it occurs in the New Testament. He says that in the other two, (I Thess. 4:4 and I. Tim. 2:15), "it perhaps inclines to the resultant state."

Bartlett reverses this opinion. He writes on this point:

The form of the word, indeed, suggests that emphasis should lie on the process involved. But its actual usage, which is perhaps exclusively Biblical and patristic, does not bear this out..... Hence, the idea of sanctification as a quality or state sometimes attaches to *ἁγιασμός*, even outside the N.T.; while in the N.T. it will be found to be the prevailing thought in one form or another.¹⁶

The exclusive Jewish and Christian use of these nouns is stated by Moulton and Milligan: "Clear evidence for the verb and noun outside biblical and ecclesiastical writings appears to be wanting."¹⁷ They also suggest that these

¹³HDB, IV, 391

¹⁴Thayer, in loco.

¹⁵MGL, in loco.

¹⁶HDB, IV, 392.

¹⁷VGT, v.s.

four derivatives from *áγλος* were formed when that term "was appropriated in Jewish circles to represent their special idea of 'holiness.'" The Greek already had *εἰς* and its derivatives; "the variant words with the added a answered to them in function, but were free from pagan association."¹⁸

Cremer, in his Biblico-Theological Lexicon, devotes twenty-five pages to a treatment of *áγλος*, its derivations, and its synonyms. He enters into the theological implications of the terms more than is necessary for our discussion in this chapter. But certain points are of interest here.

Attention is first given to the reason why the biblical writers chose *áγλος*. Its use in the New Testament is due to its adoption by the Septuagint translators. They are the ones who chose the word and invested it with a definite significance. Cremer points out the fact that *εἰσός* is the most common word in classical Greek to express the idea of holiness. But it was rejected--it occurs only twice in the New Testament, according to the Englishman's Greek Concordance--and instead the Septuagint translators selected , a very rare word in classical Greek, as we have already seen. Cremer agrees with Moulton and Milligan as to the reason for this--to have a term as free as possible from pagan association.

¹⁸VGT, v.s.

3. SUMMARY OF VOCABULARY

It appears that the final settlement on the meaning of *áycos* and its derivatives will have to be made on the basis of their use in the New Testament and the Septuagint, rather than on the root meaning alone. As *áycos* was used by the Greek classical writers, it did not have the full significance that it has in the New Testament. The theological and ecclesiastical development of words used in the Greek Bible is a favorite theme with Cremer. Of course, his thesis has been weakened very greatly by the discoveries of Deissman and later scholars. But there is still a residuum of truth in the fact that Biblical writers put fresh or increased content into the terms they used.

As far as derivation of words is concerned, A. B. Davidson has a discriminating observation to offer. He writes:

Etymology is rarely a safe guide to the real meaning of words. Language, as we have it in any literature, has already drifted far away from the primary sense of the words. Usage is the only safe guide....Hence the Concordance is always a safer companion than the Lexicon.¹⁹

So, while we have found that *áycos* and its derivatives have primarily the idea of sacredness, and secondly the idea of purity, yet it will be in a study of the use of the terms in the New Testament itself that we shall make our final decision as to meaning. The papyri and other non-literary

¹⁹TOT, 257.

remains do not help us much here, as reference to Moulton and Milligan will show.

4. IMPORTANCE OF THE GREEK AORIST FOR OUR STUDY

The question as to whether sanctification is instantaneous or gradual hinges largely on the significance of the aorist tense in Greek, as far as New Testament exegesis is concerned. Most exponents of instantaneous sanctification have leaned heavily on the testimony of Christian experience for support of the doctrine. But that is completely outside the field of our present investigation. What we wish to know is: What does the New Testament teach with regard to the doctrine? And here the most significant factor is the use of the aorist tense in passages that speak of the destruction of sin in the heart of the believer, the crucifixion of the old self. The most important question that we can ask, then, is: Just what is the essential meaning of the aorist?

5. THE MEANING OF THE AORIST TENSE IN GREEK

Some grammarians have held that there is not necessarily any absolute distinction observed in the New Testament in the use of various tenses. Older writers sometimes spoke rather loosely of one tense being used "for" another. But a close study of the Greek text will lead one to feel that the distinctions are so pronounced and definite in the case of many passages that we are probably justified in assuming that, in general, these distinctions amount to real differences.

The late Prof. A. T. Robertson, in his monumental and authoritative work, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, voices his disapproval of those who would deny the distinctive significances of the various tenses. He believes that such a view does injustice to the Greek writers and violence to the phenomena of the New Testament. Writing on the subject, he says:

In general one may say that in normal Greek when a certain tense occurs, that tense was used rather than some other because it best expressed the idea of the speaker or writer.²⁰

What, then, does the aorist mean? Goodwin's Greek Grammar was long a standard authority for classical study. It contains a good summary statement on this point.

The aorist takes its name (ἀόριστος, unlimited, unqualified) from its denoting a simple past occurrence, with none of the limitations (ὁρῶ) as to completion, continuance, repetition, etc., which belong to the other past tenses.²¹

With regard to verbs which refer to a state or condition, Goodwin writes:

The aorist of verbs which denote a state or condition may express the entrance into that state or condition.²²

Dana and Mantey agree with Goodwin as to the essential meaning of the aorist.

²⁰p. 836.

²¹p. 270.

²²Ibid.

The fundamental significance of the aorist is to denote action simply as occurring, without reference to its progress.²³

Burton, in his Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek, finds that the essential idea of the aorist is best expressed by the adjective "indefinite".²⁴ As to its most common use in the indicative, he says:

The Aorist Indicative is most frequently used to express a past event viewed in its entirety, simply as an event or a single fact. It has no reference to the progress of the event, or to any existing result of it.²⁵

This is what he calls the "Historical Aorist". It may describe: "momentary action"; "an extended act or state", viewed as a single whole; or, "a series or aggregate of acts viewed as constituting a single fact".²⁶

It should perhaps be remarked here that Burton recognizes other uses for the aorist which include the ideas of inception and result. But the historical is the most common use.

That the aorist tense is used in the New Testament for "an extended act or state", as well as for "momentary action" is demonstrated clearly and conclusively by the following passages:

John 2:20 -- τετρεσφάροντα καὶ ἐξ ἑτερονόχουδομήθου ὁ ναὸς οὗτος. Here the statement that the temple was forty-six years in the process of being built is expressed by the

²³MGG, 193.

²⁴Pge. 16.

²⁵P. 19.

²⁶Pp. 19, 20.

aorist. And the whole point of the assertion is this prolonged period of time in contrast to Jesus' declaration that He would raise this temple (τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον) in three days. In other words, the aorist tense is used specifically in a place where the whole emphasis is upon the prolonged length of time involved in a certain process. This hardly accords with the idea that the use of the aorist is restricted to momentary action.

Hebrews 11:27 -- τὸν γὰρ ἀόρατον ὡς ὁρῶν ἐχαρτέρησεν
The verb used here, χαρτερέω (found only here in the New Testament), is essentially durative in nature. It expresses the idea of patient endurance. Obviously, such a thought indicates prolongation of time.

Hebrews 11:23 -- ἐκρύβη τρίμηνον ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ.
The aorist tense is used here for an action covering a period of three months. But the whole period of three months in hiding is treated as a single event in Moses' life.

Romans 5:14 -- ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θάνατος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Νωὴ.
Here a state or condition existing over a period of thousands of years is expressed by the aorist. The imperfect might seem to us to fit the case more appropriately, but the writer is simply making a summary statement with regard to the whole period of time indicated. It is the point of view of the speaker or writer that determines the grammatical usage.

Revelation 20:4 -- καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη. This is a very similar example to the one

just quoted from Romans. The whole period of the millenium is treated as a single event. The aorist is used because the author did not desire, in this case, to emphasize the continuance of the reigning.

It will be noted that these examples have been taken from the Pauline and Johannine literature, as well as from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hence, this usage is representative of the different New Testament writers with regard to the meaning of the aorist tense. It indicates that while the action in each case is treated as a single whole the aorist does not state that the action was momentary.

The question of the temporal significance of the aorist participle requires some attention. It bears definitely on the translation of Acts 19:2. The main point of interest there is whether the believing (πιστεύοντες) is to be taken as antecedent to the receiving (ἐλάβετε), or as simultaneous with it. The former is the interpretation suggested by the King James' Version, the latter that given by the Revised Version.

The problem is one that cannot be decided dogmatically, since the aorist participle is used frequently in the New Testament both for action simultaneous with the main verb and also for action antecedent to it.

As examples of antecedent action several passages in Matthew might be cited. In 4:2 we read of Jesus that having fasted (νηστεύσας) he afterward hungered (ἐπείνασεν). In

27:3 it is stated that when Judas saw (ἰδὼν) that Jesus was condemned, having regretted (μεταμεληθείς) his act, he returned the thirty pieces of silver. In 27:5 there are two examples. Judas having cast (ρίψας) the silver into the temple departed (ἀνεχώρησεν), and having gone away (ἀπελθὼν) he hanged himself (ἀπηνύχαστο).

In each of these cases the aorist participle precedes the main verb. But there are many examples of antecedent aorists following the main verb. For instance, in Mark 1:31 we have ἤγειρεν αὐτὴν κρατῖσας τῆς χειρός. Other examples of the same construction may be found in Acts 17:31, Colossians 1:3, 4 and Hebrews 1:3. So the fact that the participle follows the main verb in 19:2 does not affect the matter of its temporal relationship to the main verb.

There are numerous instances in Acts of aorists participles being used to indicate action simultaneous with that of the main verb. Acts 15:8, 9 contains two good examples -- ἔμαρτύρησεν αὐτοῖς θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καθὼς καὶ ἤρην, καὶ οὐθεν διέκρινεν μεταξὺ ἡμῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν, τῇ πίστει καθαρίσας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν.

It is evident that the question of choosing between antecedent and simultaneous action will sometimes have to be settled on the basis of the context and meaning of the passage. There is room here for personal prejudice to influence a person's decision. Robertson declares that the antecedent use "is indeed the most common use of the aorist

participle",²⁷ and yet, as we shall see later, he prefers to interpret the case in Acts 19:2 as antecedent.

It would appear that the question cannot receive final settlement on the basis of Greek grammar.

6. SUMMARY OF SYNTAX

I once read a quotation from Goodwin's Grammar which stated that the aorist tense denotes "momentary action."

This was used as an argument for instantaneous sanctification. But I have been unable to find any such statement in Goodwin or in any other Greek grammar. After investigating Robertson, Moulton, Blass, Winer, Goodwin, and Burton, as well as lesser lights, I have concluded that there is no good authority for the above claim which has been made frequently by the exponents of instantaneous sanctification. It is evident that the use of the aorist tense in the New Testament cannot be cited as "proof" of that view.

However, it does seem to me that the main implications of the use of the aorist tense do favor the idea of instant destruction of sin and death to self. Since there is a tense, the imperfect, which emphasizes continuous action, it would seem to me that the uniform use of the aorist would justify a strong inference in favor of instantaneousness.

²⁷GGNT, 860.

PART TWO
SANCTIFICATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER ONE
THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

In the study of the Synoptics the field will not be limited to the teachings of Jesus. However, the source of each statement will be noted, as far as it can be ascertained.

1. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S PREACHING

Perhaps the first passage in the gospels that has any reference to our subject is a part of the preaching of John the Baptist. Luke tells us that his fiery and prophet-like utterances had aroused the curiosity of the people as to who he might be. Perhaps he was the promised Messiah.¹

It was in answer to their questions, perhaps unspoken, that John made a clear differentiation between himself and the Christ who was to come after him. He said:

I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire.²

We are not ready at this point to discuss the problem of the connection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and sanctification. That will confront us when we come to the study of some of the passages in Acts. But it does seem that the added thought of "fire" has reference to the sanctifying of the Christian.

¹Luke 3:15.

²Matt. 3:11. The statement is found in all three Synoptics. (All quotations of Scripture are from the American Standard Version.)

This view is opposed by Broadus in his Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. He avers that the term "fire" in verse eleven should be interpreted in the light of its use in verses ten and twelve, where it evidently refers to the destruction of the wicked. He has some writers, both ancient and modern, on his side, but the majority favor the more obvious application to the work of the Holy Spirit in purifying the hearts of believers. The latter interpretation is that of Chrysostom, Calvin, Godet, Edersheim, and numerous other scholars.³

It does not seem to me that Broadus has made out a very good case here. The contrast in verse eleven is not between the righteous and the wicked, but between the two baptisms, that of John, and that of Jesus. John baptized with or in water, unto repentance; Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit unto cleansing, or purifying. That seems to be the thought of the passage. Fire is used in the Old Testament not only for destruction but also for purification.

It seems to me that this passage indicates that the baptism in or with the Holy Spirit was to be one of the distinctive features of Christ's ministry to His followers. The sanctification as well as the justification of those who believe in Christ is emphasized in the New Testament.

2. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Sermon on the Mount is preeminently practical and

³Broadus, CGM, 51.

ethical, rather than theoretical and doctrinal, But there is one verse which seems to belong outstandingly to the realm of the ideal. This verse is central to the whole "sermon" and is the climax and summary of the teachings of the fifth chapter of Matthew. It reads as follows: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁴

The Greek word τέλειος, here translated "perfect", requires a little study. Just what did Jesus mean when he said that the believer was to be "perfect"?

The word τέλειος comes from τέλος, which means "end, termination". Hence the most obvious meaning of τέλειος is "having reached the end, finished, complete." The idea of perfection here then is primarily that of completeness.

The word τέλειος occurs nineteen times in the New Testament. In all but two of these passages it is translated "perfect" in the Authorized Version. In I Corinthians 14:20 it is translated "men"--"in understanding be men". In Hebrews 5:14 it is rendered "of full age"--"meat belongeth to them that are of full age." The American Standard Version gives this verse as follows: "But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

In two other passages the American Standard Version, departing from the Authorized, interprets τέλειος in the sense

⁴Matt. 5:48.

of maturity. In I Corinthians 2:6 we read: "We speak wisdom, however, among them that are full grown." Ephesians 4:13 says: "Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There seems to be little question as to the wisdom of the change made by the Revised Version in substituting "full-grown" for "perfect". It helps to clarify the matter and to save needless controversy over the word "perfect"--an inevitably controversial term.

But the meaning of τέλειος is not limited to that of "mature, of full age". For in Romans 12: 2 it is applied to the will of God. It may mean in this passage the "complete" will of God for the individual. It has the same idea of completion in I Corinthians 13:10, where it is contrasted with the partial which is a leading feature of existence in this life. It doubtless has the same meaning in James 1:4-- "Let patience have her perfect (complete) work."

Then there are several passages in which τέλειος evidently contains our more usual conception of perfect as meaning "faultless". In Hebrews 9:11 we have a reference to a "more perfect tabernacle". James 1:17 tells us that "every perfect gift" comes to us from above. James also (1:25) bids us look into the "perfect law of liberty." And John the Apostle (I John 4:18) speaks of "perfect love". It is obvious

that τέλειος is used of both maturity and faultlessness.

Trench has a good discussion of the New Testament usage of this term. He writes:

In a natural sense the τέλειοι are the adult, who, having reached the full limit of stature, strength, and mental power appointed to them, have in these respects attained their τέλος, as distinguished from the νεοί or παῖδες, young men or boys. This image of full completed growth, as contrasted with infancy and childhood, underlies the ethical use of τέλειος by St. Paul, he setting these over against the ἡμιτελεῖς ἐν Χριστῷ.⁵

But what does the term mean in its two occurrences in Matthew 5:48? The matter is complicated by the application of the adjective both to man and to God. Speaking of this problem, Trench says:

It will be seen that there is a certain ambiguity in our word "perfect", which, indeed, it shares with τέλειος itself; this, namely, that they are both employed now in a relative, now in an absolute sense.⁶

Perhaps the best way to interpret the word in Matthew 5:48, as applied to the believer, would be in the light of the picture of true righteousness as drawn by Jesus in the preceding verses. It is to be essentially an inner perfection, rather than an outer one. The heart of it will consist in sincerity, simplicity, and singleness of purpose, as developed more fully in Chapter six. It is not a perfection of conduct, primarily, but a perfection of motive, of attitude, of thought. It consists of humility and its cognate virtues, as indicated in the beatitudes.

⁵Trench, SNT, 73.

⁶Ibid, 73.

And yet it is not to be restricted to the believer's attitude toward God. It applies very definitely to the social relationships of life. It includes kindness, chastity, truthfulness, patient forbearance, and the capstone virtue of love--love for all, even our enemies.

Jesus evidently meant that the Christian should seek to become "perfect" in the ways here indicated. Absolute perfection is out of the question here.

4. SUMMARY

While the terms "sanctification" or "sanctify" do not occur in the Synoptic Gospels, we have noted clear references to the subject in the preaching of John the Baptist and in the teachings of Jesus. John declared that the distinctive baptism of Christianity would not be water baptism, which was his method but the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. It was to be a sanctifying, cleansing baptism. It would appear that the church of today has failed to appreciate and emphasize this truth as clearly as did the Baptist himself.

Again, while the Sermon on the Mount does not deal theologically with the subject of sanctification, yet all of its teaching is appropriate and applicable. This sermon might well be called a treatise on "applied Christianity". It relates to the ethics of sanctification, if not definitely to the experience.

It is interesting to note that Jesus' emphasis was on perfection. It has long been popular to condemn all

"Perfectionism", and to point out all the imperfections of the "perfectionists", as Benjamin Warfield has done in his two volumes on the subject.⁷ It seems to me that what we need to do is to face the use of the term "perfection" in the New Testament and find what it means. That would seem to be a more profitable study. At least we must recognize the fact that Jesus used it.

⁷See Bibliography.

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CHAPTER TWO

ACTS

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...the Holy Spirit,

The promise of Jesus to his disciples...

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1. SANCTIFICATION AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our study of the book of Acts begins at the same point as our study of the Synoptics; namely, with a reference to the preaching of John the Baptist. In his last interview with His disciples before His ascension, Jesus charged them not to leave Jerusalem until they had received the promised Holy Spirit. Then He added:

For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.¹

How one can read this passage and yet emphasize water baptism almost to the complete exclusion of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is hard to understand. Yet that is exactly what is being done in most of the churches of Christendom. It would seem to be a fair inference from Jesus' words that we do not have a full-fledged Christianity without the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The promise of Jesus to His disciples was fulfilled "not many days hence", on the day of Pentecost. While the disciples were waiting in the upper room in obedience to Jesus' command,

Suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

¹Acts 1:5.
²Acts 2:2-4.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was heralded by two signs, the one audible, the other visible. The disciples heard "an echoing sound as of a mighty wind borne violently",³ like the roar of a tornado. As they sat there, wondering what was going to happen next, there appeared to them fiery-looking tongues.

The scene reminds us of John's statement that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit "and fire". While it is not stated that the wind affected everyone of the assembled group, we do read that a tongue of fire sat on each of them. Evidently there was some significance attached to the fact.

The immediate result of the disciples' being filled with the Spirit was that they were enabled to speak efficiently and effectively to the crowds that gathered to witness the strange phenomenon. They spoke efficiently because people of seventeen different nationalities heard the gospel in their separate languages. They spoke effectively, because three thousand out of the crowd were converted on that very day. Pentecost has generally been called the birthday of the Christian Church. Certainly this new world-conquering religion was born alive!

There are two questions that confront us in the study of what took place on the day of Pentecost. The first is, "Was this experience only an enduement with power, or did it

³Robertson, WP, in loco.

involve an inward transformation that might be called sanctification?" The second question is, "Was the happening on the day of Pentecost simply an event having official and dispensational significance, or was it an experience having personal and continual significance?" We shall take up these questions in turn.

At the famous council of Jerusalem, where the nature of Christianity was being discussed, Peter took the floor to plead for Gentile freedom from the Mosaic Law. In proof of God's plan for Gentile salvation, Peter referred to his experience in the house of Cornelius. It was there that he had used his keys to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. Now he interprets the event.

And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.⁴

That Peter connected this event in the house of Cornelius with that which took place on the day of Pentecost is clear from his report to the Jerusalem church, upon his return from Caesarea. He says:

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.⁵

⁴Acts 15: 8,9.

⁵ Acts 16:15,16.

Putting these passages together, it seems clear that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a heart-cleansing experience. The Holy Spirit is the cleansing Spirit. When He comes He purifies the heart of the one who receives Him.

It seems to me, then, that it would be correct to say that after Pentecost the disciples were sanctified in a sense which was not true of them before that event. The indwelling Holy Spirit exerted a new sanctifying power in their hearts. Pentecost was for the first believers an epochal experience which made them different from what they had ever been before.

Without seeking at this point to give a full and final answer to this first question, we go on to the second. Is the event of Pentecost in the lives of the early disciples to be taken as a norm of Christian experience today?

It seems to me that the exponents, or opponents (!) on both sides of this question have been somewhat in error in their contentions. In the first place, those who spend much effort in seeking to demonstrate the fact that the disciples were actually Christians before Pentecost appear to me to have proved nothing vital by their assemblage of arguments. Granted that the disciples were truly believers in Christ and followers of Christ, that Jesus said they were not of the world but that the Father had given them to Him--what does all this prove? The fact still remains that the Holy Spirit was poured out for the first time, that He "came", on the day of Pentecost. This event according to John's Gospel, had to wait

until Jesus was glorified.⁶ That the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is primarily of historical significance appears to me to be evident. It was then that the Holy Spirit came in a new way, and He has been present in and with the church of Jesus Christ in a manner different from His presence on earth before that time. Certainly Pentecost does not "prove" that sanctification, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is a second crisis in Christian experience. We must face the facts; and that is what we are attempting to do in the present undertaking. As Abraham Lincoln said in the Civil War, we are more concerned that we shall be on God's side than we are that God shall be on our side. And we believe that God is always on the side of truth.

But does this dispensational aspect exhaust the meaning of Pentecost? Or does Pentecost have a personal application to our own experience? In order to answer these questions we shall have to look at some other passages in the book of Acts.

It is common to speak of three Pentecosts in the apostolic church. There was the initial one at Jerusalem, which we have already noted. The second one, sometimes called the "Gentile Pentecost", took place in the house of Cornelius. The third is known as the "Ephesian Pentecost".⁷

The tenth chapter of Acts records Peter's visit to the

⁶John 7:39.

⁷Sometimes the "Samaritan Pentecost" is included as a fourth.

house of Cornelius. The latter is described (in verse two) as:
 a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

Certainly this man Cornelius was a godly individual. But was Cornelius a "Christian", in the full sense of that term? If so, holiness advocates have some ground for their claim that this incident teaches a second work of grace.

It seems to me, however, that those who put forth such an argument show a lack of historical knowledge. There is nothing in the passage just quoted to indicate that Cornelius was "converted" in the senseⁱⁿ which we use that term. In fact, Peter in his report to the Jerusalem church, has this to say about his arrival at the house of Cornelius:

And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house.⁸

It would appear, then, that Cornelius' salvation was the object of Peter's errand. Very evidently both men understood it that way.

When we examine what took place in the centurion's home we have a strong confirmation of this fact. It is to be noted that Peter said nothing in his sermon about the historical incident of Pentecost or about the experience of being filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in

⁸Acts 11:13,14.

Peter's sermon, and that was in connection with His coming upon Jesus at His baptism by John.

But what was Peter talking about when the Holy Spirit fell on the group assembled in Cornelius' house? The forty-third verse of the tenth chapter gives us the closing statement of his message.

To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name everyone that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins. .

It has sometimes been said that Peter was on the wrong line in his preaching here, that he failed to sense the need of his audience. So God interrupted his sermon by pouring out the Holy Spirit on his listeners.

It seems to me that this view of the affair assumes too much. To say that Peter was preaching one thing and that his hearers suddenly received an experience that had no reference to his message hardly seems reasonable.

"Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ".⁹ Peter was challenging his listeners to believe in Christ, that they might receive remission of sins. Is it not most reasonable to assume that they did believe in Christ--of whom they may have known little or nothing--and that they did receive remission of their sins as a result?

That brings us back again to our question, Was Cornelius a Christian? His servants described him as:

⁹Rom. 10:17.

a righteous man and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews.¹⁰

This language would certainly indicate nothing more than that Cornelius was a proselyte to Judaism. In fact, the inference is that he was not at all in touch with Christianity, for if he had been he would not have been in ^{the} favor of the Jewish nation. A. T. Robertson says of the expression "one that feareth God" that this is Luke's "usual term for the Gentile seekers after God."¹¹ Cornelius was a devout worshipper in the synagogue, but not a Christian believer. Probably this was the first time that he had heard of Christ as Savior, and he accepted Him at once. Clearly, there is nothing here that could be used as "proof" for a second work of grace.

The "Ephesian Pentecost" is recorded in the nineteenth chapter of Acts, verses one to seven.* We are told here that when Paul came to Ephesus he

¹⁰Acts 10:22

¹¹WP, on Acts 10:2.

Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ τὸν Ἀπολλῶ εἶναι ἐν Κορίνθῳ
 Παῦλον διελθόντα τὰ ἀνωτερικὰ μέρη ἐλθεῖν εἰς
 Ἑρεσον καὶ εὗρεῖν τινας μαθητάς, εἶπέν τε πρὸς
 αὐτοῖς· εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύοντες
 οἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν· ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον
 ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν, εἶπέν τε· εἰς τί οὖν ἐβαπτίσθητε;
 οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα. εἶπεν δὲ
 Παῦλος· Ἰωάννης ἐβάπτισεν βάπτισμα μετανοίας,
 τῷ λαῷ λέγων εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν ἵνα
 πιστεύσωσιν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ἀκούσαντες
 δὲ ἐβαπτίσθησαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.
 καὶ ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου χειρᾶς ἦλθεν τὸ πνεῦμα
 τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτούς, ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφύττειν.

found certain disciples: and he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given. And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men.

This passage requires careful study; so we have quoted it at length. There are a number of problems here, and we need to have the text before us.

In the preface attention has already been called to the fact that no doctrinal premise can be built upon the King James' rendering of Paul's first question. The tense of "receive" is aorist. While that may sometimes be translated by our English perfect, yet the most common rendering is that given above. As we have seen, the aorist simply states an act as occurring.

But it is the clause "since ye believed" in the King James Version which has occasioned considerable misunderstanding. This clause is all one word in the Greek, an aorist participle,

NOTES.

We have already noted that the aorist participle may signify either simultaneous or antecedent action with relation to the main verb. While the latter is the more common use,

Robertson prefers the former for this passage.¹²

If antecedent action is to be allowed, the translation would read, "Having believed, did ye receive the Holy Spirit?" I see no reason why this is not the most natural rendering of the passage.

On the other hand, this could hardly be taken as proving that the receiving of the Holy Spirit was to be subsequent to the believing. For we must allow the possibility of translating the participle as simultaneous with the main verb. And even if the translation suggested above should be adopted, it would not necessarily imply that the receiving was a separate experience in time from the believing. The most that could be said would be that faith was a necessary prerequisite to the reception of the Holy Spirit.

But who were these "disciples" at Ephesus? That question is filled with difficulties. Paul had only touched at Ephesus on his return from his second missionary journey, but he had left Priscilla and Aquila there.¹³ Soon after his departure an Alexandrian Jew named Apollos had appeared on the scene. He knew only "the baptism of John". Priscilla and Aquila had taken him and "expounded unto him the way of God more accurately."¹⁴ The next thing we are told of him is that he left for Corinth. It does not state that he preached any in Ephesus after his instruction by Paul's associates.

¹²WP, in loco.

¹³Acts 18:19.

¹⁴Acts 18:24-26.

It seems fair to assume that these few disciples whom Paul encountered on his return to Ephesus on his third journey had not necessarily been influenced by Apollos, either before or after that preacher met Priscilla and Aquila. Robertson says of them:

There is no reason at all for connecting these uninformed disciples of the Baptist with Apollos. They were floating followers of the Baptist who drifted into Ephesus and whom Paul found.¹⁵

At any rate, we are told certain definite things about these disciples. In answer to Paul's first question they expressed complete ignorance concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. They evidently had not heard of what took place at Pentecost.¹⁶ In answer to Paul's second question they informed him that they were disciples of John. Paul reminded them that John had told his followers to believe on Jesus, who was to come after him.

Then we are told that they were "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." It is quite evident that they now believed on Jesus for the first time and so became truly Christians. The situation was similar to that of Cornelius and his friends. These Ephesian disciples might be considered to have been one

¹⁵WP, in loco.

¹⁶The A.S.V. evidently gives the sense of the passage, though the A.V. here follows the Greek more carefully. The passage is parallel to John 7:39, where "the Spirit was not yet" cannot be taken absolutely. However, in the verse in John the word "given" is found in some Latin and Syriac manuscripts. It should be supplied in both passages to make sense.

step ahead of the Caesarean group, inasmuch as they had been baptized by John the Baptist or his followers.

Paul not only rebaptized these twelve men, but he also laid his hand upon them, with the result that the Holy Spirit came on them. This method was followed at Samaria by Peter and John,¹⁷ and at Damascus by Ananias.¹⁸

If there is any argument here for the baptism of the Holy Spirit being subsequent to conversion, it would not be in Paul's question but in the laying on of hands after their baptism. However, it would appear that the one immediately followed the other.

But there is one other passage that it does not seem to me can be disposed of quite as easily as these three "Pentecosts".¹⁹ That is the account of Philip's revival in Samaria, recorded in the eighth chapter. We are told Philip "proclaimed unto them Christ," that many people "believed" and were "baptized". Finally, Peter and John were sent down officially from Jerusalem. The two apostles laid their hands on the young converts, and they "received the Holy Spirit."²⁰

Clearly, these recipients had been definitely "converted" under the preaching of Philip, and yet they did not receive the

¹⁷Acts 8:17.

¹⁸Acts 9:17.

¹⁹These are the only three places in Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned.

²⁰Verses 5, 12, 17.

Holy Spirit until Peter and John came down some time later and laid their hands on them. It does not seem to me that any of the facts we have discovered in our study of the other three incidents are applicable here. The situation is decidedly different.

However, it must be recognized that the revival in Samaria marked a definite milestone in the expansion of Christianity. The Jews would be slow to believe that Samaritans could be recipients of God's favor shown in salvation through Jesus. It may be that it was necessary for Peter and John to witness the actual outpouring of the Spirit on these Samaritans before the Jerusalem Jews would sanction a Samaritan church. Peter had already found himself in difficulty because of his trip to the house of Cornelius. Perhaps the best we can say is that this passage alone should not be allowed too much weight in settling a doctrinal controversy.

2. USE OF THE TERM "SAINT"

The word "saints"²¹ is used of the believers only four times in Acts, though it occurs very frequently in Paul's writings. But since it occurs first here in the New Testament, we shall discuss its meaning now.

David Foster Estes in his article, "Saints" in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia writes:

It should also be noted that while, as has been said, to be a saint is not directly and primarily

²¹Masculine plural of the adjective ἅγιος; so "holy ones".

to be good but to be set apart by God as His own, yet the godly and holy character ought inevitably and immediately to result. When God consecrates and claims moral beings for Himself and His service, He demands that they should go on to be fit for and worthy of the relation in which He has placed them.²²

That the idea of personal character cannot be stressed too much in interpreting the use of the term "saints" in the New Testament is apparent to everyone who has given any thought to the subject. Paul addresses the Corinthian believers as "saints" and then goes on to show them that they are still "carnal" because of their constant divisions and quarrels.²³ It is also to be noted that the word "saint" almost always occurs in the plural in the New Testament. Paul uses it for the company of the believers in each city to which he writes. "It is an appellation of all Christians as Christians."²⁴

With this agrees the statement of J. V. Bartlet, who writes:

All the justified are "saints", and as such are marked by true repentance from dead works and faith towards God. But faith towards God in Christ involves devotion to an obedient walk after Christ's example, as befitteth saints; and to this practical aspect of saintship attention is growingly directed as time goes on.²⁵

3. SUMMARY

One of the main emphases of Acts is on the need of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The book is a record of the

²²IV, 2661.

²³I Cor. 3:3.

²⁴Article "Saints", in SDB, IV, 2785.

²⁵Article "Saints", in HDB, IV, 353.

glorious results of this experience in the lives of the early Christians. The lesson that successful service is possible only through the Holy Spirit is paramount here. That much seems indisputable.

But that we find here positive proof for the doctrine of a "second definite work of grace" is not so easy to demonstrate. Honesty, in the light of our study, compels us to state our belief that if that doctrine depended on the book of Acts alone it could not stand the test of a scientific exegesis. The passages that are used most frequently as proof material when faced in a frank, unbiased way, do not seem to yield the results often attributed to them. It would appear that we must look to Paul for a theological settlement of our problem.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

Most New Testament scholars concur in the view that the Thessalonian epistles were the first letters written by Paul, and perhaps the first books to be written of any in our New Testament. With regard to the later epistles there is considerable difference of opinion. For the sake of convenience we have adopted the chronological arrangement given by A. T. Robertson,¹ as being a reflection of the best conservative modern scholarship on the subject.

1. The Thessalonian Epistles.

Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. That it was composed largely of Gentiles is indicated clearly by the account in Acts.² The fact is also confirmed by Paul's own statement that they "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God."³ We shall need, then, in our study of these epistles, to keep in mind the pagan background of the Thessalonian Christians.

The two letters which Paul wrote to Thessalonica are not burdened heavily with theology. They are preeminently practical. But it is interesting to note in this connection that we find a disproportionately large number of passages in these epistles bearing directly on the subject of sanctification. Evidently Paul viewed the doctrine of sanctification primarily from the

¹WP, Vol. IV, Introduction

²Acts 17:4.

³I Thess. 1:9

practical point of view.

There are two passages in First Thessalonians which are especially striking. Both are in the form of a prayer, a phenomenon rather common in Paul's writings. In his letters to his churches he frequently alternates between prayer and praise, or intersperses these with rebuke and exhortation for his readers. We see the frequent interplay of various emotions on the heart of the great apostle.

And so Paul prays for the Thessalonian Christians:

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.⁴

The second passage "is like unto it". At the close of the epistle Paul writes:

And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it.⁵

It is interesting to note that both of these passages strike the eschatological note which is distinctive of these epistles. Paul, is concerned that his Thessalonian converts shall be found "without blame" when Christ comes for his church.

The question as to whether Paul expected the return of Christ to earth in his own day need not concern us unduly here.

⁴I Thess. 3:12, 13.

⁵I Thess. 5:23, 24.

The evidence would seem to support the contention that he did, at least when he wrote this first epistle. Certainly he believed we should be prepared for His return at any time.

But we shall examine the passages in relation to our subject. The word translated "holiness" in the first citation is *ἁγιωσύνη*, which Abbott-Smith defines as "the state in man resulting from *ἁγιασμός*"⁶ Boise, following Thayer, defines it as "moral purity".⁷ Another writes: "Holiness, the result of sanctification, comprehends the whole life in and from the Spirit".⁸

Paul's desire is that the Thessalonian believers may appear before Christ at His coming unblamable in the sphere of holiness. There may be blame attached to them on other scores, because of mistakes due to human frailties. But in the sphere of moral purity they are to be unblameable.

But this blamelessness is "before our God". It is not to be expected that even the most saintly Christian will be able to escape all criticism from men. But in the sight of God, at the bar of Divine judgment, he can stand pure in heart and soul, unblameable before God.

It appears from verse twelve that the means of establishment in this state of holiness is a constant increasing and abounding in mutual love. Holiness and love are united in the

⁶MGL, s.v.

⁷Notes, in loco.

⁸Lange's Commentary, in loco.

character of God and cannot be divorced in the life of the Christian. Love is the best expression of holiness. No one can retain holiness long who does not love. He who increases most in love "toward all men" will most surely be established in holiness. This seems to be the teaching of this passage.

Our second passage tells us that God is the author of our holiness. Paul prays God to "sanctify" the Thessalonians "wholly".

The verb sanctify here is in the aorist tense. We have already noted that the aorist does not "prove" momentary action. But we can certainly say, negatively, that the non-use of another tense is argument against a progressive process, unless a definite statement be found for such an idea. At least, this passage does not teach progression, and its implication seems to tend in the opposite direction.

The word "wholly" in the Greek occurs only here in the New Testament. Robertson says of it:

Here it means the whole of each of you, every part of you, "through and through" (Luther), qualitatively rather than quantitatively.⁹

Paul goes on to pray that they may be "preserved entire". In facing all the relevant facts, we note that the verb "preserve" is in the aorist tense, just as "sanctify" is. We cannot stress the aorist force in the first without recognizing it in the second.

⁹WP, in loco.

J. V. Bartlet, in his article on "Sanctification", has a very illuminating discussion of these two passages. He says:

There is a state possible to Christians, corresponding to the ideal of their calling, in which they can be described as "unblameable in holiness", and into which they may be brought by the grace of God in this life. Therein they stand hallowed through and through, every part of their being abiding by grace in a condition fit to bear the scrutiny of their Lord's presence without rebuke. Such is the teaching of I Th. 3:13; 5:23.¹⁰

The ethical implication of sanctification is stressed in a third passage in this first epistle. The fourth chapter begins with an exhortation to walk in a way that will be well pleasing to God. Paul then goes on to relate the believer's conduct to his sanctification.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter; because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you.¹¹

It is necessary to keep in mind the pagan background of the Thessalonian Christians, in order to understand these admonitions. It would appear that these believers needed the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to keep them clean in their lives. The pagan life about them was so low and wicked

¹⁰HDB, IV, 393. I have omitted the Greek words cited.

¹¹I Thess. 4:3-8.

that they needed a mightier force within them to combat the evil all around.

We see examples of that truth in the stories of missionary work among savage peoples. We assume in our civilized society that if a person professes Christianity he will live a clean life. But the record of mission work has many cases of moral lapses even on the part of the native preachers. Their inheritance and environment are powerful forces, which can be overcome only by the grace of God.

It is held by most of the commentators that Paul is here discussing especially the marriage relationship. The Greek seems to require that "vessel" be interpreted as referring to "wife" rather than "body". Marriage is not to be for the purpose of uncleanness; it is to be a sanctified relationship.

In order that each one may be kept from all kinds of moral impurity, God wills our sanctification. A few have held that God's will is "that ye may abstain from fornication", making "your sanctification" parenthetical. But almost all scholars are agreed that "your sanctification" is in apposition with "the will of God". God wills, among other things, that we should be sanctified, in order that we may abstain from impurity of life.

There is only one reference to sanctification in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. He tells them that

God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.¹²

Moffatt translates "by the consecration of your spirit." But this fails to take account of the full meaning of sanctification. It is more than consecration, as we have noted. Of course, the question as to whether πνεῦμα here refers to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit is a debatable one, as it is in a number of New Testament passages. However, most commentators seem agreed in holding that the reference here is to a sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit.

The term "salvation" in this passage appears to refer to final salvation, which comes, to use Weymouth's phrase, by "the Spirit's sanctifying influence". God has not only chosen us to initial salvation -- what we commonly term "conversion". He, from the beginning, chose us unto eternal salvation, and this salvation is ours if we yield ourselves to the Spirit's sanctifying influence and believe the truth. A Spirit-filled, Bible-loving Christian need not feel concerned about his eternal salvation.

2. The Corinthian Epistles

The city of Corinth in Paul's day was notorious for its great wickedness. To "Corinthianize" meant to corrupt morally. Its culture and learning, of which its inhabitants were very proud, was really superficial compared to that in Athens.

¹² II Thess. 2:13.

Yet the city was a great cosmopolitan, commercial center, strategically located. And so Paul chose it as an important headquarters for his missionary work. He realized that any preaching of the gospel here would have an immeasurably wide influence. Traders, sailors, merchants, travelers -- men of many races and nations -- would carry the good news to the far-flung outposts of the Roman Empire. And so the great apostle spent eighteen months of his valuable time in laying a solid foundation for the Christian church at Corinth.

It was no easy task to do this. "All the problems of a modern city church come to the front in Corinth".¹³ In spite of Paul's self-sacrificing labors and his strong statesmanship, the church had its troubles.

Soon after Paul had left Corinth an eloquent preacher named Apollos had followed him in the pastorate there. Many of the Christians had been captivated by his oratory and pleasing personality. Others stood loyal to Paul as the founder and father of the church. Still others declared themselves for Peter, the leader of the apostles after Pentecost. A fourth group evidently prided itself on superior spirituality. Its members were the true followers of Christ.

When Paul heard that these various groups were quarreling in the church at Corinth he immediately wrote them a warning letter. He did not hesitate to assert his apostolic authority over a church which he had founded. He was ready to come to

¹³ Robertson, WP, in loco.

them with a rod, if necessary.¹⁴

One of the surprising things about this epistle is the way in which the apostle greets these Corinthian Christians. He calls them "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints".¹⁵

This sounds strangely like a contradiction of his language in the third chapter, where he calls them "carnal" three times.¹⁶ Instead of being spiritual, they were fleshly.

How are we to reconcile these passages? How can the people who are described in this epistle be called "sanctified" and "saints"?

It is evident that the term "having been sanctified" (perfect passive participle) is not equivalent to the expression we studied in Thessalonians, "sanctify through and through". These Corinthian Christians were a long way from perfection either in love or in moral character and conduct! They certainly were not "sanctified" in the sense in which that term is often used.

What did Paul mean, then, by such expressions? With regard to his use of the word "saints" we shall have to maintain that in its widest sense the term includes all Christians. Clearly, the word as used here is synonymous with "believers".

But what of the term "sanctified"? I think that we shall

¹⁴ I Cor. 4:21.

¹⁵ I Cor. 1:2.

¹⁶ I Cor. 3:1-3.

have to grant that it here means primarily "consecrated to God". Apparently the formal sense is sometimes evident in the New Testament as well as dominant in the Old. Boise comments:

From the contents of this epistle it would appear that they were still very far from being completely holy, but that the work of divine grace was only begun in their hearts. Sanctified then means, set apart from the world, from the service of Satan, and consecrated, devoted, to the service of God.¹⁷

It seems clear from this passage that we cannot insist on always attaching ethical significance to the verb *αγιαζω* in the New Testament. To say that the Corinthian Christians were "holy people" would be to go contrary to our general conception of Christian holiness. They are called "sanctified" here because they belonged to God. And in a measure their sanctification had already begun, due to the operations of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

In the thirtieth verse of the first chapter we find an interesting combination of ideas. Paul writes to the believers at Corinth:

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.

The Revised Version agrees more closely with the Greek in this passage than does the Authorized. In the latter the four things which we receive from God in Christ Jesus are listed together in a balanced construction. But the Revised

¹⁷ Notes, in loco.

follows the Greek in placing wisdom first, in the general statement. Then righteousness is linked with sanctification in the Greek by means of τε καὶ. This is indicated by the punctuation in the Revised, and perhaps still better in the margin of the Revised by "both righteousness and sanctification and redemption". That is the literal Greek, although it appears a trifle awkward in English.

Meyer argues for the equality of the four terms, as expressed by the Authorized Version. But his American editor, T. W. Chambers, takes issue with him on this point. Mr. Chambers favors the margin of the Revised. He comments:

The order of the words in the original, the stress which Paul lays on wisdom throughout the chapter, and the striking contrast thus gained, confirm the view that the three latter nouns are epexegetical of the first and are intended to disclose the glorious characteristics of the wisdom which is from God as distinguished from the wisdom which is of human origin.¹⁸

It appears, then, that the main emphasis of Paul's statement in this passage is that in contrast to the wisdom of men Christ has been made wisdom to us from God. And this wisdom is particularized as consisting of righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

The last of these, redemption, is evidently climactic and inclusive. That is, our righteousness and sanctification, obtained in this life, will culminate in a complete redemption, of which they are parts or phases. The final purpose of

¹⁸Meyer, Corinthians, 41.

Christ's work is to redeem us fully. Our being made righteous and our being sanctified are pathways to this goal.

What is the relation, then, of righteousness and sanctification? To say that the first refers to the outward life of the Christian and the second to his inward life is suggestive, but appears to me to be a little superficial. That may be the meaning of righteousness in this passage. But the typical Pauline concept expressed by that term is primarily that of right relationship to God, rather than that of right dealings with our fellowman. While the application to this verse of the contrast between the inner and outer life may be a part of the truth, yet I do not think that it is the whole truth.

Neither do I think that the problem is solved by reversing the conceptions, as some have done, making righteousness refer to our legal standing before God and sanctification to the quality of our life before men. Sanctification is something more than sanctimoniousness. It is fundamentally a conditioning of the heart, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, fitting it for closer fellowship with God.

It seems to me that it is nearer to the truth to interpret the three terms as applying to the commencement, the continuance, and the culmination of our "so great a salvation".¹⁹ To refer them to three events or crises -- justification, sanctification, glorification -- may be suggestive, but is hardly conclusive.

¹⁹Heb. 2:3. "Both" the commencement "and" the continuance are in this life; the culmination is in the next.

Righteousness, sanctification, redemption -- these are large terms with large meanings. To limit them to single events or crises is to cramp their meanings unjustifiably. These words refer to states or conditions, as well as to acts or events. We may feel that their primary reference is to this or that in any given passage. But probably we should be cautious in defining dogmatically the limits of the meanings of such comprehensive terms as those with which we are dealing here.

There is one other point we notice in the passage we are studying.²⁰ It is "in Christ Jesus" that we have righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We possess these priceless treasures only as long as we are in Him. When we cease to abide in Him we lose the life that is found only in Him.²¹

It is in union with Christ that we are made partakers of the wisdom from God, one phase of which is sanctification. It is not enough for us to think of what Christ did for us on the cross. Sanctification, in its fullest meaning, is a work of God in our hearts, accomplished by union with the indwelling Christ. That which is set apart to God is made holy for His use. Christ becomes to us sanctification when He rules our hearts by His Spirit.

In two passages in First Corinthians Paul uses the figure of the temple for believers. In the first he declares

²⁰I Cor. 1:30.

²¹John 15:6.

that the Christians are a temple of God. Evidently he means the Corinthian Christians as a group.

Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye.²²

The second passage states that the body of the individual believer is a temple of God.

Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.²³

The word translated "temple" in both passages is more correctly rendered "sanctuary" in the margin. It is not the whole temple enclosure to which reference is made, but the holy place. Both passages state that the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God, dwells within this temple. It is that which makes it a sanctuary, a sacred place.

In the first of the two scriptures Paul says that God will destroy the one who destroys His temple. Meyer,²⁴ with others, holds this to be a reference to the temple at Jerusalem. But most commentators consider the whole passage as referring to the spiritual sanctuary composed of the Corinthian Christians.

But whichever way the middle section is taken the truth remains that these Corinthians are said to be holy. We have

²² I Cor. 3:16, 17.

²³ I Cor. 6:19, 20.

²⁴ in loco.

already noted that in moral character some of them were far below standard. It would seem that the term "holy" here would have to be interpreted in a formal rather than in an ethical way. By their schisms, discussed in the first chapter of the epistle, some of the believers were tending to destroy the organism of the church at Corinth. The church is one body. To divide it is to destroy it. Paul warns them that they should have reverence for the sanctuary of God.

In the second passage Paul gives his answer to any and all antinomians who would say that it does not make any difference what one's body does, as long as one's soul is pure. Paul declares that the Christian's body is a sanctuary of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is to be treated with reverence. As a sacred thing it must not be defiled.

It was probably due to the prevalent disparagement of the body in the church of later centuries that some Christians added the words found in the King James, "and in your spirits which are his." It was evidently an effort to soften Paul's strong plea for the sanctity of the body.

But these words are found only in late MSS. and are clearly not genuine. Paul's argument stands four-square for the dignity of the body as the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit united to the Lord Jesus.²⁵

²⁵ Robertson, WP, in loco. The added words *καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν, ἅτινά ἐστιν τοῦ Θεοῦ* are not found in BAC^xD^xEFG. The Syriac version has the addition, but not the Old Latin, Vulgate, Coptic, or Aethiopic. The testimony of the Fathers is almost wholly against it.

The Christian, then, must keep his body clean. It is useless to say that the actions of the body do not affect the soul. Any intelligent person should know that. The interaction of mind and body is an important phase of both physiology and psychology. In fact, we cannot entirely divorce the two fields of study. The modern emphasis upon the relation of spirit and matter has at least demonstrated that truth. Such titles as "The Spiritual Nature of the Physical Universe" indicate the concept which is pushing to the front in modern philosophy.

One of the enigmatical passages in First Corinthians, of which there are several, contains an interesting use of the words "holy", and "sanctified". Paul is discussing the problem of marriage. After advising Christian husbands or wives to continue living with non-Christian companions, the apostle offers this reason for doing so:

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.²⁶

What does Paul mean by saying that an unbelieving husband is sanctified by a believing wife? Robertson's comment seems reasonable, and to the point. He says:

Clearly he only means that the marriage relation is sanctified so that there is no need of a divorce. If either husband or wife is a believer and the other agrees to remain, the marriage is holy and need not be set aside.

But Meyer disagrees with this interpretation. He holds

²⁶ I Cor. 7:14.

that the pagan husband is actually sanctified by union with the Christian wife. But he interprets the sanctification as meaning simply consecration to God, not moral holiness. The unbelieving husband ceases to be "profane".

The non-believer is, as it were, affiliated to the holy order of Christians by his union of married life with a Christian person, and, so soon as his spouse is converted to Christ and has thereby become holy, he too on his part participates in his own person (not "simply in his married relationship",....) in his consort's holiness, the benefit of which he receives in virtue of his fellowship of life with her, so that he is no longer ἁγιάζομαι as hitherto, but -- although mediately after the fashion described -- a ἁγιασμένος.²⁷

It does not appear to me that Meyer's interpretation is reasonable. There may be a measure of truth in it. There may be some very limited sense in which a non-believer could be said to be sanctified by marriage union with a Christian wife. But Meyer's presentation seems artificial, rather than real.

But whatever may be the meaning of Paul's statement here, one thing seems certain. The sanctification which he postulates as resulting from the marriage relationship is formal, rather than ethical. It would be absurd, in the face of numberless cases in actual life, to claim that an unsaved husband is, by virtue of his union with a Christian wife, sanctified in any real and moral sense.

Clearly, then, we have here a formal, ceremonial use of the term "sanctified" in the New Testament, even as applied to persons.

²⁷ Meyer, in loco.

The same thing could be said of the term "holy" as applied to the children of such parents. That children are made morally holy by having Christian parents, or parent, is denied by the lives of thousands of such offspring. No one would question the sanctifying influence of a Christian home. But the environment does not change the heart. Only the direct application of the grace of God can do that. But probably Boise is correct in interpreting the term "holy" here (*ἅγιος*) as meaning "sacred".²⁸ Robertson suggests that the word for "unclean" (*ἀκάθαρτα*) might well be rendered "illegitimate".²⁹

We close our discussion of this much-discussed text by quoting what seems to us to be a very sensible interpretation, as given by Boise:

Thus it may be said even of the unbeliever, that he is consecrated to a sacred union, one of divine appointment. This is what the words assert and this is all which they assert. This use of the words *ἅγιος* and *ἁγιασμός* is a frequent and familiar Old Testament conception, where the word so often means simply, consecrated to a sacred use. This conception of the marriage relation belonged to Christianity, where either party was Christian, and formed a marked contrast to the loose social morality of all heathen nations.²⁸

There is one more passage in First Corinthians in which the term "sanctified" occurs. After giving a list of gross sinners, Paul says:

And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.³⁰

²⁸ Notes, in loco.

²⁹ WP, in loco.

³⁰ I Cor. 6:11.

The order of the words in this text seems odd. Meyer interprets "washed" as referring to the baptism of the Corinthian Christians, by which act they washed themselves of their sins (aorist middle). In order to explain the order of the words he holds that ἐσχατίᾳ should be translated "ye were made righteous", and that it refers to the righteous life of the Christian following his baptism and sanctification.³¹

Robertson also refers "washed" to the act of baptism, but holds that the sanctification and justification are mentioned as having taken place before the baptism. They were acts of God, wrought inwardly, and baptism was the outward expression of them.³² But Boise says:

I am by no means sure, as is commonly thought, that this refers to baptism. Without any such reference, the sense of the passage is clear and striking.³³

But, unfortunately, he fails to explain what this clear sense is. Apparently, though he does not so state, he makes these three verbs apply to three aspects of the one event, conversion. This could be done by eliminating the idea of baptism.

I must confess that, to me, the most reasonable interpretation seems to be that suggested by Moffatt's translation:

Some of you were once like that; but you washed yourselves clean, you were consecrated, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

³¹ Meyer, in loco.

³² WP, in loco.

³³ Notes, in loco.

The meaning then would seem to be that they repented of their sins and forsook them. They washed their lives, outwardly and inwardly, of sinful acts, thoughts, and motives. Having done this, they were consecrated to God to be His property, and then they were justified by God. These would be the steps in conversion. We have seen people forsake their sinful habits and associates, when the conviction of the Holy Spirit seized them. Then they gave themselves to God and experienced His pardoning grace.

The one who insists on interpreting sanctification in the New Testament as always referring to a cleansing act of God, subsequent to regeneration, will certainly have difficulty with this verse. Inverting the order of the words does not help the situation any. It appears to me that this is one more verse which must be added to the list of Pauline passages in which sanctify means "consecrate" and nothing more. I do not see how these three verbs can be interpreted soundly except as being practically contemporaneous. Adam Clarke, a leading Methodist commentator, confuses things by making justification follow baptism.

T. W. Chambers, the American editor of Meyer's commentary on Corinthians, disagrees with his German source as to the meaning of "washed" in this passage. He thinks it unnecessary to refer it to baptism. With regard to the relation of the three verbs, he writes:

The attempt of Hodge and others to make the last verb mean forensic justification is inconsistent with its position here, for according to the Apostle's doctrine everywhere, sanctification and moral cleansing follow justification and are dependent upon it, while here they would be represented as conditioning it, which is simply impossible.³⁴

It seems to me that Chambers is right when he concludes that "all three expressions are to be taken simply as a varied utterance of the same truth".³⁴ The balanced structure of the sentence would certainly favor this interpretation.

At least, we may say that the expression "ye were sanctified" does not refer to an event which took place after their justification, unless the word ἐδικαιώθητε be interpreted as referring to an outward righteousness of life resulting from the cleansing and sanctifying of their hearts. It is true that one meaning for δικαίω, given by Abbott-Smith, is "to show to be righteous". This sense might allow for the progression suggested. But this seems a rather strained interpretation. It destroys the balance of ideas here.

Second Corinthians is singularly free from references to sanctification. But in the first verse of the seventh chapter there occurs a phrase which is pertinent to our subject.

Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The verb "cleanse" is in the (hortatory) aorist subjunctive. That would imply that Paul is calling upon these Christians for

³⁴ Meyer, Corinthians, 146.

immediate action. Let us begin to cleanse ourselves, in view of these promises.

The participle "perfecting" is in the present tense, which indicates continuous action. Having cleansed ourselves, let us go on perfecting holiness. It is in accord with the Greek that Robertson denominates it as

Aggressive and progressive holiness, not a sudden attainment of complete holiness, but a continuous process.³⁵

It would appear from this verse that sanctification is something that requires human cooperation. A person cannot be holy in heart unless he keeps his outward life and his thought life clean. Holy living is not an automatic type of existence. It requires constant watching and praying, guarding ourselves against contamination from the sin about us. The holiest saints have always emphasized this.

Meyer's comment on this phrase seems well stated.

To establish complete holiness in himself is the continual moral endeavor and work of the Christian purifying himself.³⁶

Of course, this is only one side of the subject of sanctification. But the point we wish to emphasize is that sanctification is not either a human work or a divine work, but both a human work and a divine work. God begins the work of sanctifying us when He enters our hearts at conversion. It is His presence that sanctifies. But this inward work, if it

³⁵ WP, in loco. Authorized.

³⁶ Meyer, in loco.

is to continue, must have the active cooperation of our wills in guarding ourselves against sin. We are very much of the opinion that any effort to live a sanctified life without constant attention to our attitudes and motives, our words and our actions, is doomed to failure.

3. Galatians

One of the most distressing times in Paul's life came when he received word that his Judaizing opponents had made serious inroads in the Galatian churches. Without taking time, apparently, to secure the services of an amanuensis, the anxious apostle wrote with his own hand a letter of entreaty and remonstrance to the Galatian Christians. Like Second Corinthians, this epistle is full of strong emotion. The apostle is fighting to save the churches.

The main theme of the Epistle to the Galatians is justification by faith, in opposition to justification by works of the law. But Paul also deals here with the subject which we are investigating. He propounds and defends his doctrine of sanctification through the Spirit. Just as doing the works of the law is utterly unavailing for our justification, so it is also for our sanctification.

The first passage in this epistle that appears to bear on our subject is the twentieth verse of the second chapter. It is much more definite, as well as accurate, in the Revised Version than in the Authorized.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.³⁷

In the previous verse Paul makes the statement: "For I through the law died unto the law." It would seem to me, therefore, that the primary meaning of the crucifixion mentioned in our text is that of death to the law and all that went with it in Paul's life.

Probably this, however, does not exhaust the meaning of the text. Paul's crucifixion was personal. He says, "No longer does the ego (Greek word for 'I') live, but Christ has taken the place of the ego."

This is the essence of the sanctified life. It is the Christ life, instead of the self life. Sanctification involves the complete acceptance of the will of God for one's life. "Not my will, but thine be done", is the prayer of the sanctified heart at all times, as it was the prayer of Him who had just said, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself."³⁸

How may one know that his self has been crucified? It seems to me that the main test is a complete and continual attitude of submission to the will of God. As long as one

³⁷ Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι· ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῇ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός; ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παρδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.

³⁸ John 17:19.

asserts his own will against the known will of God, he may well question whether he has experienced the crucifixion of self which Paul claims to have had. Dispositions and personalities differ widely. But all Christians may know that they desire the will of God with all their hearts.

D. A. Hayes, in his helpful work on Paul and His Epistles stresses the thought that the key to many of Paul's utterances is to be found in the fact that he is answering the arguments and accusations of his opponents. What otherwise seems enigmatical, and perhaps contradictory to the general apostolic teaching, on this thesis becomes clear and easily explained.

It would appear, then, that one of the contentions of the Judaizers was that, while the Galatians may have been justified by faith in Christ, yet if they wanted to go on to perfection they must observe carefully all the external requirements of the law.

Paul's retort is pointed. He makes short work of such nonsense.

(Are ye so foolish (lit., senseless)? having begun in the Spirit are ye now perfected in the flesh?)³⁹

Sanctification is not a matter of outward observance of a legal code. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian, sanctifying his dispositions and affections, making him holy in thought and motive and attitude. Legalism

³⁹ Gal. 3:3.

produced the Pharisees, who were the objects of Christ's most scathing denunciations. It is the Holy Spirit who has produced the saintly characters of the Christian church.

It would seem to be a fair inference from Paul's teaching here that we do not advance toward perfection in the Christian life by our own efforts and strivings, but rather by allowing the Holy Spirit to operate unhindered in our personalities. He must have the active cooperation of our wills in the matter; but no amount of human struggle and effort can make us more holy. Our attitude makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to mould us more and more into the image of Christ. And Christ-likeness is the final goal of true sanctification. It is the highest goal of the Christian life.

In the fifth chapter of Galatians, verses sixteen to twenty-five, Paul draws a sharp contrast between "the works of the flesh" and "The fruit of the Spirit." In the former catalog are listed the basest and most degrading things of life. In the latter are found the noblest and most uplifting ideals of human life.

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.

The noblest in Roman philosophy and culture was summed up in Stoicism. The Stoics started with self-control as their foundation stone and added faithfulness, kindness, longsuffering, and perhaps peace. But they never experienced in large measure the wonders of love and joy.

And there was one virtue upon which none of the ancients placed a very high premium. Meekness was not popular in the pagan world of Christ's days. Certainly none of the Roman heroes were examples of it. And yet every student of the teachings of Jesus knows full well that Christ made meekness both basic and central in the Christian reconstruction of life.

Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁴⁰

Meekness is not a virtue of human origin. It took Christianity to discover it, and it has taken the influence of Christianity to make possible a proper appreciation of it.

But Paul tells us, further, that meekness is a fruit of the Spirit. Not only did Christianity discover this virtue and furnish an appreciation of it, but it is only the indwelling Spirit of Christ that can produce it. True meekness is found only where the Spirit dwells.

How may one avoid the works of the flesh and grow the fruit of the Spirit in his life? Paul has a definite answer to that question, found in verse sixteen.

But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

What is meant by walking in the Spirit? The apostle throws light on that question in his further discourse.

⁴⁰ Matt. 18:3, 4.

Ver. 16 is interpreted by vv. 18 and 25. To "walk in the Spirit" is to be "led by the Spirit"; it is so to "live in the Spirit" that one habitually "moves" (marches: ver. 25) under His direction.⁴¹

If one would avoid living a carnal life, he must live a spiritual, a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life. There is no other alternative.

The opposition here affirmed exists on the widest scale. All history is a battlefield for the struggle between God's Spirit and man's rebellious flesh. In the soul of a half-sanctified Christian, and in churches like those of Corinth and Galatia, whose members are "yet carnal and walk as men", the conflict is potent. The Spirit of Christ has established His rule in the heart; but His supremacy is challenged by the insurrection of the carnal powers.⁴²

But must this conflict continue throughout life? That has been the contention of a host of preachers and writers. We are told that as long as we are in the body we shall never escape the sharp and at least intermittent struggle between the flesh and the Spirit.

It seems to me that Paul has already furnished us with a categorical answer to that question in the sixteenth verse, quoted above. He says that if we walk by the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the desires of the flesh. In verse seventeen Paul is describing the condition of the Galatian Christians in his portrait of the mutual conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. But he tells the Galatians how that struggle may be ended in victory for them. By following the Spirit fully they

⁴¹ Findlay, Galatians, 348.

⁴² Findlay, Galatians, 350.

would be saved from the flesh and its domination.

Findlay has a pertinent comment on this question, which I shall quote in closing our study of Galatians. Speaking of the flesh and Spirit, he writes:

They can never come to terms with each other, nor dwell permanently in the same being. Sin must be extirpated, or the Holy Spirit will finally depart. The struggle must come to a definite issue. Human character tends every day to a more determinate form; and an hour comes in each case when the victory of flesh or spirit is irrevocably fixed, when "the filthy" will henceforth "be filthy still" and "the holy, holy still" (Rev. 22:11).⁴³

It would seem to me reasonable to hold that the secret of victory lies in a conscious and complete surrender of our whole personality to the Spirit of God, to be led by Him in "the way of holiness".⁴⁴

⁴³ op. cit. 352.

⁴⁴ Isa. 35:8.

4. Romans.

After Paul's impassioned defence of his Gospel in his letter to the churches of Galatia, it appears that he composed with more leisurely care what we know as the Epistle to the Romans. Galatians is a polemic against Judaism. Romans is a constructive presentation of the essential doctrines of salvation. "Galatians seems like the first draft of the argument which has been elaborated and perfected in Romans."⁴⁵

Paul lays the foundation for his discussion of the doctrines of salvation by a clear presentation of the problem of sin. In the first chapter he portrays the sin of the Gentile, in the second the sin of the Jew, while in the third he shows that all the world is guilty before God. Beginning at the twenty-first verse of the third chapter he treats of justification by faith. This continues to the end of chapter five.

In the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of Romans Paul discusses the subject of sanctification. It is the longest single treatment of this doctrine in the New Testament and so will require our extended attention.

As was suggested in the case of Galatians, Paul frequently in Romans is answering the false charges and inferences of his Judaistic opponents. One of these appears to have been that his doctrine of free grace in the forgiveness of sins would encourage people to keep on sinning. So Paul asks the question:

⁴⁵ Hayes, PHE, 305.

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" But he quickly repudiates the very idea of such a thing. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?"⁴⁶

Certainly this language of the apostle does not condone any kind of a sinning religion. Paul says that we died to sin and hence no longer can be alive to it.

But what is meant by the phrase "died to sin"? It does not seem to me that Godet is exaggerating the meaning when he says: "The words therefore denote the absolute breaking with sin."⁴⁷

It is difficult to understand how a person can claim to have renounced sin and accepted Christ, while yet he continues to live in conscious disobedience to the will of God.

There is a close connection between the death of Christ for our sins and our own death to sin. This is well expressed by Godet, when he writes:

The sentence of death with which God visited the sin of the world in Christ is reproduced in the conscience of every sinner. The instant he applies the expiation to himself, it becomes in him the sentence of death on his own sin.⁴⁷

But how does this death take place? Godet likens it to the breaking of an evil friendship.

As, in order to break really with an old friend whose evil influence is felt, half measures are insufficient, and the only efficacious means is a frank explanation followed by a complete rupture which remains like a barrier raised beforehand

⁴⁶ Rom. 6:1, 2.

⁴⁷ Romans, in loco.

against every new solicitation; so to break with sin there is needed a decisive and radical act, a divine deed taking possession of the soul, and interposing henceforth between the will of the believer and sin.⁴⁷

In the sixth verse of this sixth chapter Paul describes more definitely the nature of death to sin. It is a crucifixion of the old self.

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin.

The verb "crucified" here is in the aorist tense. It refers to something that has happened in the past. It is not a process which is going on continually in the present but an act which has already taken place. The same was true with the statement that we "died to sin". That also is in the aorist tense. Evidently the two expressions refer to the same event. So claims Robertson, who also avers strongly that this did not take place in baptism.⁴⁸

What is it that was crucified? Paul calls it the "old man". What does he mean by this expression? He evidently refers to the fallen nature of man.

The expression: our old man, denotes human nature such as it has been made by the sin of him in whom originally it was wholly concentrated, fallen Adam reappearing in every human ego that comes into the world under the sway of the preponderance of self-love, which was determined by the primitive transgression. This corrupted nature bears the name of old only from the viewpoint of the believer who already possesses a renewed nature.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Romans, in loco.

⁴⁸ WP, in loco.

⁴⁹ Godet, Romans, in loco.

It would appear that Godet makes the expression "our old man" equivalent to original sin, the fallen Adamic nature. He contends that it does not say that this nature is killed, but only that it is crucified. But that seems to me to be a rather artificial distinction. When we are told that a certain man was crucified, we certainly assume that that was the way in which he met death. It is true that crucifixion is a lingering death, a long and painful process. But there comes the moment of death. Why would that not be true of the crucifixion of our old man?

Paul states that the purpose of this crucifixion is "that the body of sin might be done away".⁵⁰ The verb here, *καταργέω* means "to make idle or inactive, to render inoperative or invalid, to abrogate, abolish."⁵¹ However, Godet favors the rendering of the King James, "destroyed".

What does Paul mean by the "body of sin"? That is a vexing question. Many of the commentators, interpret it as meaning the physical body, "the body marked by sin". But I do not see how the above verb could be used of the physical body. Godet denies that this "body of sin" is the same as "our old man", but he offers no satisfactory explanation. His American editor says that his interpretation "is open to the objection that it confuses the literal sense and the figurative

⁵⁰ ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἀμαρτίας.

⁵¹ Abbott-Smith, MGL, v.s.

of the term body."⁵²

It seems to me that the only reasonable view is that both expressions refer to the same thing, the fallen, sinful nature of man, what theologians call "original sin". It is to be done away with, so that it no longer operates in our lives.

It is not stated that this takes place instantaneously. But, as we have already noted, the aorist at least favors this idea negatively. It definitely does not imply a gradual process. And it speaks of this experience as already having taken place.

The statement in the next verse has created a great deal of discussion.

For he that hath died is justified from sin.⁵³

There are two problems here. We shall deal first with the second one. What is the meaning of the word "justified" in this passage? Godet contends that it does not have properly the meaning "to free from the power of." Yet he is forced to concede that it "must have a somewhat different meaning from its ordinary dogmatic sense in Paul's writings." There seems to be no way of excluding the idea suggested in the rendering "released" in the margin of the Revised. Even Robertson translates: "stands justified, set free from."⁵⁴

The other problem is the interpretation of the phrase

⁵² Godet, Romans, 245, note.

⁵³ ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

⁵⁴ WP, in loco. *in loco*.

ὁ ἀποθνήσκων (aorist participle), "he that hath died." Godet and Meyer take this as applying to physical death. And yet Godet finds difficulty in doing so, for he writes:

The other meaning would be more suitable in some respects: "He who is dead spiritually (in the sense of ver. 6), is thereby set free from the power of sin." Undoubtedly in a general way this is the apostle's meaning in ver. 7; the context demands it.⁵⁵

In view of his last statement, which seems true, it is difficult to see why Godet insists on the literal interpretation. It certainly does violence to the context. Both preceding and following this verse Paul discusses death in a figurative sense. It would seem to be the most sensible thing to interpret the word the same way in this passage.

It appears that most commentators have stumbled over the idea of being freed from sin in this life. It is held that as long as we are in the body we must commit sin. Death alone can free us entirely from its power. Adam Clarke comments:

Then death is his justifier and deliverer!....So then, the death of Christ and the influences of the Holy Spirit were only sufficient to depose and enfeeble the tyrant sin; but our death must come in to effect his total destruction. Thus our death is, at least partially, our Savior; and thus, that which was an effect of sin....becomes the means of finally destroying it. The divinity and philosophy of this sentiment are equally absurd. It is the blood of Christ alone that cleanses from all unrighteousness; and the sanctification of a believer is no more dependent on death than his justification.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Romans, in loco.

⁵⁶ Commentary, in loco.

Moule, in the Expositor's Bible, interprets death here as referring to the death of Christ on the cross.

The thought is of the atoning Death, in which the believer is interested as if it were his own. And the implied thought is that, as that death is "fact accomplished", as "our old man" was so effectually "crucified with Christ", therefore we may, we must claim the spiritual freedom and power in the Risen One which the Slain One secured for us when he bore our guilt.⁵⁷

This appears to come much nearer the truth than the literal interpretation as referring to physical death. The whole context relates to the believer's death to sin. Why should we hold that in this verse alone he refers to physical death? That theory breaks the continuity of the argument. For in the very next verse he writes:

But if we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him.

What is meant by the expression, "died with Christ"? Does it mean simply that we were identified with Christ in his death on the cross?

I cannot see how it could be said in any real way that we died with Christ to sin nineteen hundred years ago. That death is not our death until we appropriate it by faith. Just as it is true that Christ's atonement for us on Calvary is utterly unavailing for us as individuals until we accept it for our sins, so it is true also that we do not die unto sin until we enter into the meaning of Christ's death in our own experience. If it could be said of all Christians that

⁵⁷ Moule, Romans, in loco.

they died to sin with Christ on the cross, how is it that so many are still slaves to sinful habits. Obviously, they have not yet died to sin.

We have talked with many who have said something like this: After I gave my heart to Christ I found that I still had sinful thoughts and sinful desires, to which I sometimes yielded. I was conscious of the fact that sin still had dominion over me. Then I came to Christ in a full surrender of my whole being, asking Him to deliver me from the power of sin in my life and earnestly pleading that His Holy Spirit might control my life. I was then conscious of the fact that He did set me free from the power of sin, so that no longer did I feel sinful desires and passions rising up within me and clamoring for expression.

Now it seems to me that such an experience might properly be called a death to sin. There is no longer that inward solicitation to evil that once crowded into consciousness so frequently. God's indwelling Spirit enables us at all times to desire His will. Paul now makes reference to Christ's death and its example to us. He says, in verse ten:

For as to His dying ($\epsilon^{\iota} \alpha\pi\epsilon\theta\alpha\upsilon\epsilon$), it was as to our ($\tau\eta$) sin He died once for ever; but as to His living ($\delta^{\iota} \xi\eta$), it is as to God He lives.⁵⁸

The above translation offered by Moule throws some possible light on this rather obscure passage. Christ's

⁵⁸ Moule, Romans, in loco.

death was in relation to our sin. As sinless Son of God, He was not subject to the death penalty attached to sin. But with regard to our sin, on our behalf, He died. And this death was a full and final sacrifice for our sins, never to be repeated again. But He lives, and ever will live, in happy relationship to the Father, enjoying the Father's approval. Never again will He have to take upon Himself our sins.

And then Paul goes on to say, in the eleventh verse:

Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

That is, just as Christ in His death died to our sins -- He had no sin of His own to die to -- so we are to reckon, or count, ourselves dead forever to sin. We are to have no more traffic with sin. By faith we are to reckon ourselves forever done with sinning.

But this is possible only "in Christ Jesus." In Him alone do we find freedom from sin.

All is bound up not with the tides or waves of our emotions, but with the living rock of our union with our Lord. Union with the slain and risen Christ, in faith, by the Spirit here is our inexhaustible secret, for peace with God, for life to God, now and in the eternal day.⁵⁹

The purpose of this reckoning ourselves dead to sin is expressed in the twelfth verse. It is that sin may no longer reign in our mortal bodies, that we may no longer obey its desires.

⁵⁹ Moule, Romans, in loco.

God did not create man to live in sin. He created man to live a holy life. Christ's death is intended to redeem us from our fallen state and restore in us again the image of holiness. We are exhorted to appropriate that death for ourselves in such a way that we obtain freedom from the sin that once reigned over us. We must break away from the kingship of sin and receive Jesus as King in its place.

Not only are we to reckon ourselves dead to sin, but also we are to make this practical and real in our lives. In the thirteenth verse the apostle exhorts us to stop presenting our members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Instead we are to present ourselves to God and also our members as instruments of righteousness.

The verb παριστάμεν signifies: to present in order to put at the disposal of.....Vv. 12 and 13a have expounded the notion of the sanctification of the body from a negative point of view. Ver. 13b expounds it positively.⁶⁰

In the latter half of verse thirteen, where we are told to present ourselves to God, the verb is in the aorist tense. Meyer points out that the aorist imperative emphasizes the instantaneousness of our consecration of ourselves to God. The change from present to aorist would seem to indicate that some significance should be attached to the distinction. Paul charges us to cease permitting our bodies to be used for purposes of unrighteousness, but to present them immediately for Him to use in deeds of righteousness.

⁶⁰ Godet, Romans, in loco.

In the nineteenth verse the apostle carries this line of thought a little further. He writes:

For as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification.

These Christians had once served sin zealously. Paul urges them to be as zealous in serving their new master, righteousness. They should be as eager about the things of God as they had once been about the things of the world.

The unrighteousness of verse thirteen, a term of very broad and general significance, is defined for us more definitely in verse nineteen, which we have just quoted. Here the apostle uses two words to describe sin.

The old master is denoted by the two terms ἀκαθαρσία, uncleanness, and ἀνομία, lawlessness, life going beyond all rule, licentiousness. The first of these terms characterizes sin as personal degradation, the second as contempt of the standard of right written in the law on every man's conscience.....The two expressions therefore embrace each, as it seems to us, the whole sphere of sin, but from two different points of view.⁶¹

Over against uncleanness and lawlessness Paul places the glorious antitheses: righteousness and sanctification. Instead of unclean, our hearts and lives are to be righteous. Instead of lawless, our hearts are to be holy.

It seems to me that this may give us, by implication, a hint as to the real meaning of sanctification. It is just the opposite of lawlessness, determination to have one's own way,

⁶¹ Godet, Romans, in loco.

regardless of others. For some time it has been borne in upon me with increasing force that the very essence of sanctification is complete submission to the whole will of God.

We cannot measure a person's degree of sanctification, or test the validity of his experience, as I see it, by his outward life or manner alone. Personalities and dispositions differ widely, even among God's people. It seems to me that the only valid test of a person's sanctification is the measure of his submission to the will of God, without protest. To put it another way, we might say that a person is sanctified just to the extent that he is consecrated, and no more.

The word translated "sanctification" here is *ἁγιασμός*. Godet favors the translation "holiness" in this passage. As against the idea that the term here refers to a "progressive amelioration of the individual resulting from his moral self-discipline," he makes two observations. The first is that "from the Scripture point of view, the author of the act denoted by the term sanctify is God, not man." The second is that "even in the Old Testament the term *ἁγιασμός* seems to be used in the LXX. to denote not the progressive work, but its result."⁶² It is evident that *ἁγιασμός* may be defined as the act or process of being made holy, ~~as~~ the result of that act or process.

The result, then, of our presenting our members as servants to righteousness is a state of holiness. That is,

⁶² Godet, Romans, in loco.

holiness of life depends on our having yielded to God the control of our physical appetites and activities. Man, of himself, is utterly powerless to live a holy life. It is only as he yields himself, both soul and body, to God that he reaches the goal of holiness.

The climax of this chapter is reached in verse twenty-two, where Paul says:

But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life.

It seems to me that this verse indicates definitely that the goal of Christian living is holiness in this life and eternal life in the next. The expression, "and the end," would seem to imply a definite break between what precedes and what follows. The apostle says that, having become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness. I cannot see any justification for the wording of the last phrase, unless we apply the previous one to this life.

The form of expression used by Paul, literally rendered, would be: "Ye have your fruit in the direction of holiness." It is to the state of holiness that ye are brought. Such, in fact, is the result of action constantly kept up in dependence on God. Every duty discharged is a step on the way at the end of which God's servant sees the sublime ideal of *synopsis*, completed holiness, shining.⁶³

The theme of the sixth chapter, as our study will clearly have indicated, is deliverance from sin. Paul begins the chapter by telling us that we are freed from sin by union

⁶³ Godet, Romans, in loco.

with Christ in His death. That is really the key to this chapter.

Paul then goes on to say that we are to make this real in our own experience by reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. We are not to rest in a mere acquiescence in the doctrine of Christ's atonement for us on the cross. We are to make that death significant in our own individual cases by placing ourselves, by faith, with Christ in a true death to sin. Only in union with Christ can there be effected a real separation from sin.

In the last part of the chapter Paul makes a practical application of this to our lives by urging us to present our bodies as instruments to God, that they may become instruments of righteousness, rather than of sin. The result of such a consecration of our whole self, soul and body, to God, will be fruit in the direction of holiness, the state into which God desires to bring us, if we yield ourselves wholly to Him.

The seventh chapter of Romans has been the battleground for a great deal of theological disputation. The interpretation of the section including verses seven to twenty-five is unquestionably difficult. The fact that the best commentators disagree so radically at this point should certainly warn us against dogmatism in our discussion of this passage.

The meaning of the first six verses, however, seems reasonably clear. It may be summed up in the statement that Christ has freed us from the law. Paul states that we have

been made dead to the law, that we might be joined to Christ. This union results in our bringing forth fruit to God.

The main point I would call attention to here is that this passage does not have to do with our being freed from the law of sin within. It is the Mosaic law to which we have died, in order that we might be united in marriage to Christ.

The first six verses of chapter seven, then, are addressed to the Jews who have been delivered from the bondage of the law and have become servants of Christ. This is indicated definitely in the first verse, where Paul says: "I speak to men who know the law." These verses are a commentary upon, and demonstration of, the statement already made in the fourteenth verse of the sixth chapter. "Ye are not under law, but under grace."

One of the difficulties in Pauline hermeneutics is the fact that the great apostle often uses the same phrase with an entirely different meaning.

A good example of this occurs in the fifth verse where he refers to the time "when we were in the flesh." Elsewhere, as in Galatians 2:20, Paul frequently uses the phrase as referring to physical life. It is fairly obvious that it does not mean that here, for he refers to it as an experience of the past. Moule suggests that the real meaning of "flesh" here is "self". He says:

No word, for practical purposes, answers better than "self" (as popularly used in Christian parlance) to the idea represented by St. Paul's

use of the word ~~σάρξ~~ in moral connections.⁶⁴

Evidently, then, "in the flesh", means being dominated by the self life. It is life lived on the plane of selfish gratification, rather than of Christian consecration.

That this section refers to the substitution of grace for law is indicated further by its closing statement, in verse six, that "we have been discharged from the law", with the result that "we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter."⁶⁵

When we come to the seventh verse of this seventh chapter we immediately begin to run into difficulties. It would seem that the chapter should begin at this point. Verses seven to twenty-five, inclusive, constitute an obvious unit. This section is distinguished from what precedes and what follows by the use of the personal pronoun "I", which occurs constantly throughout it. In the adjoining sections he uses "ye" or "we".

But what, or who, is meant by "I"? Many of the commentators agree that Paul is referring to himself, that the section is autobiographical. The change from "we" and "ye" would almost seem to me to demand this interpretation.

Granted, then, that we have here a piece of spiritual and psychological autobiography, the question still remains:

⁶⁴ Romans, 184, note.

⁶⁵ γυνὲ δὲ καταργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου.... ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γραμμάτων.

To what period of his life does the apostle refer? Is this a picture of an unregenerate or of a regenerate man? Is Paul referring to his struggles to find satisfaction as a Pharisee under the law, or to his experience during the three days of blindness at Damascus, or to his struggles in his early Christian experience with the sinful propensities within, or to his present experience when he wrote?

There are advocates of each of these four views. Dr. Brown declares that the description in the first thirteen verses applies to the unregenerate man, while that from verse fourteen to the end of the chapter belongs to the regenerate man. With reference to the earlier section, Brown writes:

We regard this whole description of his inward struggles and progress rather as the finished result of all his past recollections and subsequent reflections on his unregenerate state, which he throws into historical form only for greater vividness.⁶⁶

Adam Clarke maintains that it is unreasonable to try to make this piece of autobiography fit a Christian. He writes:

It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that "the apostle speaks here of his regenerate state; and that what was, in such a state, true of himself, must be true of all others in the same state." This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully, not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character. It requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of this epistle, to see that the apostle is, here, either personating a Jew under the law and

⁶⁶ Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, Commentary, in loco.

without the Gospel, or showing what his own state was when he was deeply convinced that by the deeds of the law no man could be justified.⁶⁷

Godet adopts as his caption for this section:

"Powerlessness of the Law to Sanctify Man." He maintains that while in chapter three Paul proved the insufficiency of the law to justify, here he is concerned with demonstrating its powerlessness to sanctify.⁶⁸

Most of the Greek Fathers, together with Erasmus and other modern scholars, held that the reference here is to the legal Jew, one who tries to fulfill the law, but finds no real satisfaction therein. Augustine held this view until after his dispute with Pelagius. Then he explained the passage as a description of the converted Christian and his struggles with his sinful nature. This view was adopted by Jerome and also by the Reformers.⁶⁸

Godet's own conclusion, after a very thorough analysis of the passage under dispute, is that the allusion here is to Paul's state as a Pharisee.

What he describes then is the law grappling with the evil nature, where these two adversaries encounter one another without the grace of the gospel interposing between them.⁶⁹

Godet quotes Bonnet as favoring the same interpretation, that it is the awakened but still unregenerated man who is being pictured here.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Commentary, in loco.

⁶⁸ Romans, in loco.

⁶⁹ Romans, 293.

⁷⁰ Romans, in loco.

After making a study of the commentators⁷¹ one is impressed with the feeling that the interpretation of this difficult passage can be decided neither by logic nor by exegesis. Equally good arguments and equally accurate explanations seem to be offered by the advocates of the different views. It seems that there is such a lack of definite data for one opinion or another as to exclude any dogmatic assertions.

The explanation which, with some modifications, appeals the most to me is that offered by Moule. He finds elements of truth in all these various interpretations which have been suggested by different scholars. He agrees that the past tenses indicate that up to the close of verse eleven the description is that of the unregenerate state. But he finds a difference after that. The man now "wills not" to do evil, he "hates" it. He "delights, rejoices, with the law of God." These expressions seem to point to something existing only in the regenerated soul.

He who can truly speak thus of an inmost sympathy, a sympathy of delight, with the most holy Law of God, is no half-Christian.⁷²

But there is one lack which Moule notes in this passage. It is the "absolute and eloquent silence in it about the Holy Ghost."⁷³ The newly born Christian has not learned to depend

⁷¹ Meyer, Hodge and others agree with one or another of the views expressed above.

⁷² Moule, Romans, 192.

⁷³ Ibid, 194.

on the Spirit of God for the help which brings deliverance in the hour of temptation.

We look in vain through the passage for one hint that the man, that Paul, is contemplated in it as filled by faith with the Holy Ghost for his war with indwelling sin working through his embodied condition.⁷⁴

It is quite apparent that the seventh chapter of Romans is too full of controverted points for us to make much use of it, one way or another, in our discussion of sanctification. Of course, if we were sure that it applied to the regenerated man who has not yet learned the secret of complete and continuous victory through the Holy Spirit, then it would have a great deal to do with our study. In fact, it would be one of the most pertinent passages in the New Testament on the need for the sanctification of the believer. But we have seen that no one interpretation has commanded universal acceptance.

It must be confessed that the position of this passage in the epistle would seem to me to argue in favor of its application to the regenerated man. Why should Paul, after his lofty teaching in chapter six on the crucifixion of the old man, and the Christian's deliverance from sin, go back to a discussion of the state of an unregenerated Pharisee? The picture in chapter eight seems to follow out of that in chapter six. There is a clear note of victory in the earlier chapter, and all is glorious conquest in the later one. Why should Paul insert between these a section describing his

⁷⁴ Ibid, 193.

struggles before conversion?

It seems impossible to settle this problem definitely. The setting has a strong Jewish flavor, and it is altogether probable that the primary application of the passage is to the legalistic Jew. But other elements favor the regenerated Christian. Perhaps the most satisfactory solution would be to allow both applications. We might possibly be able to combine both ideas in an autobiographical situation by assigning the passage to Paul's three days of blindness at Damascus.

I find that Riddle, in Lange's Commentary, suggests the double application as the best solution of the problem.

To refer it to a movement possible both before and after conversion, a state with reference to the law, encourages unbelievers to go to Christ, and rouses believers to go to Him.⁷⁵

There appeared an article in a recent issue of the Christian Reader's Digest, which touches upon this question. The author, P. W. Philpott, discusses the "natural" man, the "carnal" man, and the "spiritual" man, terms which Paul uses in the second and third chapters of First Corinthians.

In his discussion of the "carnal" man, Philpott calls attention to Paul's characterization of the Corinthian Christians as "carnal" and "babes in Christ." It is evident that the term "carnal", in this passage at least, refers to those who have been born again.

⁷⁵ Romans, in loco.

Paul's concern for these Christians was that their babyhood days were greatly protracted. There was not the growth and development that there should be. They were dominated very largely by the flesh.⁷⁶

If Paul uses the term "carnal" for babes in Christ when writing to the Corinthians, may it not be that he does the same in writing to the Romans? It is difficult to understand where Adam Clarke gets his justification for saying:

From all this it follows that the epithet carnal, which is the characteristic designation of an unregenerate man, cannot be applied to St. Paul after his conversion, nor indeed to any Christian in that state.⁷⁷

It is hard to see how that statement can be reconciled with First Corinthians 3:3. I am inclined more toward the view that in the seventh chapter of Romans Paul is treating of his experience as a young convert, when he was struggling with the nature of sin within him. He had not yet learned to let the Holy Spirit take possession of him and give him constant victory.

We would not like to think that the seventh chapter of Romans is a picture of a normal Christian experience. But is it not true that many new converts pass through a period which is similar to that described there?

"Do you really think that the 7th of Romans is Christian experience?" someone asks. We reply, "No, but the 7th of Romans is the experience of a great many Christians. The 8th of Romans is Christian experience, and it is the experience of the spiritual man."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Art. "Three Men," in Christian Readers Digest, Feb., 1940, p. 5.

⁷⁷ Commentary, on Romans 7:14.

⁷⁸ Philpott, op. cit., p. 71.

The seventh of Romans, or at least a part of it, is a picture of the "carnal" man, according to the testimony of verse fourteen. There does not seem to be any great difficulty in harmonizing the description there with that given of the Corinthian Christians in Paul's First Epistle to them. Both pictures are abnormal and plead for improvement, at once both drastic and immediate.

But what could bring about this change? In Romans the secret is indicated clearly in the eighth chapter. The change from the carnal of chapter seven to the spiritual of chapter eight is effected by the Holy Spirit Himself.

A study of the seventh chapter of Romans would certainly be incomplete without calling attention to the cry of victory in the last verse: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is Paul's answer to the question of the previous verse: "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" This answer he defines and amplifies in chapter eight.

But someone will immediately remind us that the cry of victory is followed by the statement:

So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.⁷⁹

It is often taken for granted that this is Paul's final conclusion of the whole matter. This is his statement of his condition at the time he wrote this epistle. With his mind he was obeying the law of God, but with the flesh he was still

⁷⁹ Rom. 7:25.

in bondage to the law of sin.

It is strange indeed to think of this statement as describing the apostle's own Christian experience as a ~~greatest~~ missionary and church leader. According to that theory, he was still living a dual life; his mind and flesh were in perpetual conflict.

But is this the meaning of the closing statement of the chapter? I think not. I would agree rather with Meyer, when he interprets the verse as meaning that without Christ Paul's state would still be that which is described in the last part of the verse;⁸⁰ or with Godet, when he says: "He simply sums up in order to conclude."⁸¹ It is his summary of the condition described in the previous verses.

It seems to me that the burst of thanksgiving is a brief anticipation of the wonderful truth which the apostle delineates in chapter eight. Is there deliverance from this awful state of bondage to the inward law of sin? Yes, says Paul, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall turn now to the eighth chapter for a description of the method of this deliverance.

The eighth chapter of Romans is one of the outstanding sections of Scripture dealing with the Holy Spirit. It probably ranks next to the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters of John's

⁸⁰ Meyer, Romans, in loco.

⁸¹ Godet, Romans, in loco.

Gospel in that respect.

Godet holds that the "therefore" of verse one takes up the thread of the "exposition of Christian sanctification" which was broken after the sixth verse of chapter seven, the rest of that chapter being parenthetical.⁸²

But it seems to me that the inferential particle *ἀρα* would more naturally point to material nearer at hand. It might have a connection with the cry of triumph in the last verse of chapter seven.

Paul states that to those "in Christ Jesus" there is no condemnation. The last clause of the King James version of this verse -- "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" -- is evidently an "interpolation borrowed by anticipation from ver. 4." (Godet). It is not found in the earliest and best manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, as χ B C D F G. The first (negative) part occurs in A, the Old Latin, and the Peshitto Syriac. The whole insertion occurs in χ^a L and many minuscules. Internal evidence would be clearly against it as borrowed from verse four.

Does this verse refer to sanctification or to justification? Riddle thinks the former. He writes:

The question of the reference to justification or sanctification must affect the interpretation of condemnation....The position of the chapter in the Epistle, as well as a fair exegesis of the verses, sustain the reference to sanctification.⁸³

In the second verse is stated a principle which is the key to

⁸² Romans, in loco.

⁸³ Lange's Commentary, Romans, in loco.

this chapter. It seems to me that it is a key to Paul's doctrine of sanctification.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

This law of sin and of death is not the law of Moses, which Paul has already told us in the previous chapter (verse twelve) is holy. It is rather an inward, controlling force of sin in the life -- "the power of sin in us."⁸⁴

The true explanation follows from ver. 23, where he has spoken of the law which is in his members, and which renders him the captive of sin.⁸⁵

But this power in his life has been superseded by a new dominating force. Paul calls it "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It is the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing us new life in Christ Jesus.

It would seem to be a fair inference from this verse that every person is dominated by one or the other of these two "laws." He is under the control of the law of sin and death until this new force, the power of the Holy Spirit, takes the place of the former. One does not get rid of the principle of sin and death in one's life until the Holy Spirit comes to introduce a new motivating power. It is either the self-life, which means sin and death, or the Spirit-life, which means salvation from sin and eternal life.

It is to be noted here that Paul states that the new

⁸⁴ Meyer, Romans, in loco.

⁸⁵ Godet, Romans, in loco.

force in his life has freed him from the old law of sin and death. It is a real deliverance from the domination of sin, not simply an aid in the fight against sin. Godet well says:

Grace does not save by patronizing sin, but by destroying it.⁸⁶

With regard to the practical application of the wonderful truth contained in this verse, and in the entire chapter as a picture of the Spirit-filled life, Moule has some comments which it seems to me are at least worthy of consideration. They bear striking resemblance to some of John Wesley's utterances about the time and manner of the experience of entire sanctification. Moule, after describing the beauties of this higher life, offers this advice to the pastor:

Let him urge any who have yet to learn it to learn all this in their own experience, claiming on their knees the mighty gift of God. On the other hand, let him be careful not to overdraw his theory, and to prescribe too rigidly the methods of experience.

He suggests that some appropriate the Spirit's fulness and power at the beginning of their Christian life. To those to whom this revelation comes later, "as with so many of us it does come," not always is the experience the same.

To one it is a crisis of memorable consciousness, a private Pentecost. Another wakes up as from sleep to find the unsuspected treasure at his hand -- hid from him till then by nothing thicker than shadows. And another is aware that somehow, he knows not how, he has come to use the Presence and Power as a while ago he did not; he has passed a frontier -- but he knows not when.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Romans, 296.

⁸⁷ Moule, Romans, 205.

The problem of whether Paul is addressing Jews or Gentiles in his Epistle to the Romans seems to be an ever-present one as we study the epistle. Take chapters 9-11, for instance. Obviously much that is said is addressed to the Jews. Yet in 11:13 he turns directly to the Gentiles and says: "I speak to you that are Gentiles."

It seems to me that we have the same problem in chapters 6-8, which we are studying. For in the third verse of the eighth chapter he begins again to talk about the insufficiency of the law. This change of point of view from time to time seems to be one of the main sources of our difficulty in interpreting this section.

I do not see, though, how we can accept Williams' thesis that the general purpose of the epistle is to show the equality of the Gentiles with the Jews. He maintains that the specific doctrine of the epistle is justification by faith and that the discussion of this doctrine carries through the section we are studying. That chapters 6-8 have reference to sanctification he denies most emphatically.⁸⁸ This does not seem to be a reasonable view.

We are told in the fourth verse of the eighth chapter how we may fulfill the requirement of the law. It is only as we "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

It is not enough to know that we have been justified before God from the guilt of past sins. If we are going to satisfy the

⁸⁸ Williams, Romans, 193.

demands of God's holy law, we must walk after the Spirit. This evidently means that we must be Spirit-led, not self-led, Christians.

Verse six states the results of the two types of living.

For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.

The word translated here as "mind" (φρόνημα) is found only in the eighth chapter of Romans. It means, literally, "that which is in the mind" (Abbott-Smith). What Paul evidently means is that following the thoughts of the flesh means death, while following the thoughts and desires of the Spirit means both life and peace.

The nature of this "mind of the flesh" is defined for us in verse seven: it is "enmity against God." It seems to me that this should always be kept in view as indicating the essential nature of the "carnal mind." It is an attitude of rebellion against the will of God, or unwillingness to submit to His wishes and commands.

The eighth verse has often been misused. It states that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." This has often been interpreted to mean that no man while in the human body can please God.

This is certainly a gross perversion of the truth. We are told in Heb. 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God. It is surely fair to infer that by faith we may please Him.

The meaning of the phrase "in the flesh," in the verse

under consideration, is indicated clearly by the next verse:

But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,
if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.

Paul here in chapter eight is contrasting life on the plane of fleshly desires with life on the plane of spiritual aspirations. We choose either to let the flesh dominate us or to let the Spirit control us. The latter is the sanctified life.

With Christ dwelling within, the body is still condemned to death because of Adam's sin, but the spirit is alive, to live forever, because of righteousness -- the righteousness provided for us by the death of Christ on our behalf.

But if we wish to keep our spirits truly alive we must "put to death the deeds of the body."⁸⁹ This is a part of our sanctification -- keeping ourselves sanctified by choosing constantly the aid of the Spirit in putting to death the things that would hinder us spiritually.

It is a striking thought which the apostle presents in the twelfth verse. "We are debtors," he says. Why? Because of all that Christ has done for us, in paying the debt of our sins, which we could never pay.

But how are we to pay our debt to Christ? By walking after the Spirit, rather than after the flesh. Just as it is our duty to pay our honest debts to our fellow man, so it is our duty to walk in the Spirit, and thus pay our debt to God. And it is the duty of all of us.

⁸⁹ Rom. 8:13.

Too often in the Christian church the great word Holiness has been practically banished to a supposed almost inaccessible background, to the steep of a spiritual ambition, to a region where a few might with difficulty climb in the quest..... It is not an ambition; it is a duty. We are bound, every one of us who names the name of Christ, to be holy, to be separate from evil, to walk by the Spirit.....Holiness is beauty. But it is first duty practical and present, in Jesus Christ our Lord.⁹⁰

In discussing the meaning of the phrase, "put to death the deeds of the body," and especially the means by which this is done, Moule says:

He says nothing here of things often thought to be of the essence of spiritual remedies; nothing of "will-worship, and humility, and unsparing treatment of the body."⁹¹

In other words, self-discipline is not the scriptural means of sanctification. That has been the emphasis of many groups, both ancient and modern. But it is not the divine method. God's plan is to sanctify us, to give us deliverance from sin "by the Spirit." Self-discipline, watchfulness and prayer, are all necessary features of and factors in successful Christian living. But all of these will fail without the help of the indwelling Spirit.

The man who actually, and in the depth of his being, is "doing to death the practices of the body," is doing so, immediately, not by discipline, nor by direct effort, but by the believing use of "the Spirit." Filled with Him, he treads upon the power of the enemy. And that fulness is according to surrendering faith.⁹²

⁹⁰ Moule, Romans, 219, 220.

⁹¹ Ibid, 222.

⁹² Moule, Romans, 222.

The fourteenth verse contains a very challenging statement.

It says:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,
these are the sons of God.

We have already noted that there is no such thing as sanctification without the presence of the sanctifying Spirit. That is the lesson of Romans eight. It is the Holy Spirit, as the result of Christ's atonement, who delivers us from sin and its bondage and who then enables us to live a life which is well-pleasing to God.

This thought is expressed clearly and definitely by

Dr. Brown. He writes:

The sanctification of believers, as it has its whole foundation in the atoning death, so it has its living spring in the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.⁹³

There is one more passage in the book of Romans which touches definitely on this subject of sanctification. It is in the twelfth chapter, verses one and two.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

With regard to the command, "Give over your bodies,"

Moule writes:

That precept is conveyed, in its Greek form (*παροστήσαι*, aorist), so as to suggest precisely the thought of critical surrender....So, from

⁹³ Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, Commentary, in loco.

the side of his conscious experience, the Christian is called to a "hallowing of himself" decisive, crucial, instantaneous. But its outcome is to be a perpetual progression, a growth, not so much "into" grace as "in" it, in which the surrender in purpose becomes a long series of deepening surrenders in habit and action, and a larger discovery of self, and of the Lord, and of His will, takes effect in the "shining" of the transfigured life "more and more, unto the perfect day."⁹⁴

The thought of progression in this transfiguration is borne out by the tense used for "transformed" in verse two. It is the present imperative and so signifies continuous action -- "go on being transformed."⁹⁵

The change from the aorist of verse one to the present of verse two lends strong support to Moule's interpretation of a crisis of consecration, and then a growth in grace after this crisis under the dominant influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The book of Romans, then, pictures to us sanctification in two aspects. Negatively, it is death to sin. Positively, it is the Holy Spirit in His fulness controlling our lives.

⁹⁴ Romans, 328, 329.

⁹⁵ μεταμορφουθε

5. The Prison Epistles

a. Philippians

There is considerable dispute as to whether the Epistle to the Philippians was written before or after the other three prison epistles -- Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians. But we are following Robertson's order for the Pauline letters, and so we shall treat Philippians first.

The first passage in the epistle that seems to us to bear directly on the subject of sanctification is in the second chapter, verses twelve to fifteen, inclusive. Here Paul tells them to "work out (their) own salvation with fear and trembling."

A. T. Robertson has a comment on the problem raised here, which seems both suggestive and satisfying. Speaking of Paul, he says:

He exhorts as if he were an Arminian in addressing men. He prays as if he were a Calvinist in addressing God and feels no inconsistency in the two attitudes. Paul makes no attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human free agency, but boldly proclaims both.⁹⁶

Salvation is something wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and at the same time it is something for us to work out ourselves. It is accomplished only by our cooperation with God.

The apostle then goes on to exhort his hearers to do all things without grumbling and disputing; "that ye may become

⁹⁶ WP, in loco.

blameless and harmless, children of God."

With regard to the meanings of these two adjectives, Rainy, following Lightfoot, points out that the essential idea of the second is "freedom from foreign admixture; it is used of wine that is unmixed with water, and of metal that contains no alloy." He goes on to summarize:

"Blameless" signifies that no one would be able to point to any flaw in the Church: "innocent" means that actually no impure ingredient would be present. The former relates to the verdict of outsiders who pass judgment, the latter describes intrinsic character.⁹⁷

How is it possible for us to be blameless and innocent? We may be able to live such careful lives as to escape judgment from outsiders. But what of being unadulterated, "pure, sincere"?⁹⁸ Is it not true that in the full sense of that term we cannot qualify until we have died to sin? As long as there is a "law of sin" within us, it could hardly be said that our Christian character is unadulterated.

There is one text in Philippians that is often quoted in opposition to "perfectionism", as it is sometimes called. That is the twelfth verse of the third chapter: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect."

The first observation that should be made, of course, is that this text must be considered in the light of the fifteenth verse of the same chapter. Here Paul says: "Let

⁹⁷ Philippians, in loco.

⁹⁸ Lightfoot, Philippians, in loco.

us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded." The apostle disclaims perfection, and then in almost the same breath he claims it. What is the solution of this seeming contradiction?

I think it only fair to state that, in my opinion, these two verses taken together neither prove nor disprove sinless perfection. Paul is not discussing the problem of sin at all in this passage. So these verses have no reference to the question of sinless perfection.

What is the perfection which the apostle disclaims in the twelfth verse? The previous verse would seem to define it as the perfection to which the believer will attain in the resurrection. It is evidently the same thing that Paul had in mind when he wrote: "Then shall I know fully, even as also I was fully known"⁹⁹ The verb which is here translated "made perfect" is derived from τέλος, which means "end." So its basic connotation is "to bring to an end, finish; to bring to maturity or completeness, to complete, perfect." (Abbott-Smith)

It is obvious that this verb does not refer primarily to sinlessness. It is a matter of maturity, of perfection in character.

It is on the basis of the root meaning of this verb that Robertson comments:

⁹⁹ I Cor. 13:12.

Paul pointedly denies that he has reached a spiritual impasse of non-development. Certainly he knew nothing of so-called sudden absolute perfection by any single experience.¹⁰⁰

But what does Paul mean in the fifteenth verse when he includes himself among those who are perfect? The adjective here is derived from the same root as the verb in verse twelve. The solution of the problem, then, does not lie in the field of etymology. The meaning of τέλειος has already been discussed in connection with Matthew 5:48. Probably we all would agree with Robertson's interpretation.

Here the term teleioi means relative perfection, not the absolute perfection so pointedly denied in verse 12. Paul here includes himself in the group of spiritual adults.¹⁰¹

Lightfoot suggests that Paul's use of "perfect" in verse fifteen is ironical. "The τέλειος in fact are the same with the πρεσβυτέραι."¹⁰² This is a reference to those in the Corinthian church who laid claim to superior spirituality, but who were far from manifesting the spirit of Christ. They had a superiority complex, but failed in making good their claims.

Rainy, however, in Moffatt's Commentary, does not accept this view. He does not find any evidence of a tone of irony in the passage. Rather, he thinks that Paul is speaking solemnly to the older Christians, urging them to go on to further growth in grace.

¹⁰⁰ WP, in loco.

¹⁰¹ WP, in loco.

¹⁰² Philippians, in loco.

There is no imperative reason why the adjective in ver. 15 should bear a meaning strictly analogous to that of the verb in ver. 12. Though the two words are kindred, the possibility of misunderstanding is obviated by the fact that those who are spoken of in ver. 15 as "perfect" are urged to seek the perfection which Paul disclaims for himself in ver. 12. Mature.... is a far more suitable rendering in ver. 15 than "Perfect."¹⁰³

The term in the Greek was used in the mystery cults where it was applied to those who had been fully instructed, in contrast to the novices. It also had a Christian usage.

In early Christian literature it is used of baptized Christians as distinguished from catechumens.¹⁰⁴

There seems to be no reason for any misunderstanding with regard to the meaning of this passage. Paul classes himself with the mature Christians of his day; but he denies emphatically any claim to having reached the goal of perfect Christ-likeness, which comes only at the end of the race of life.

b. Colossians

The three epistles of Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians were perhaps written at about the same time, and so form a trilogy of prison letters.¹⁰⁵ The first of these is a brief personal note. We should not expect, then, to find any doctrinal statements in it.

Colossians, on the other hand, is one of the outstanding Christological epistles. It contains one of the most definite

¹⁰³ Rainy, Philippians, 164.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 165.

¹⁰⁵ Hayes, PHE WP, in 1000

statements of the deity of Christ. It was He, "the image of the invisible God", who died on the cross for our reconciliation to God.

The ultimate purpose of this redemption is stated in the twenty-second verse of the first chapter -- "to present you holy and without blemish and unreprieveable -- before Him."

The verb here, ~~παρστηναι~~ means "to place beside." God designs to fit us to stand in His presence. The first qualification for standing in God's presence is holiness. This certainly signified more than consecration. It means moral purity. We are reminded of the question asked by the Psalmist, and his answer:

Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.¹⁰⁶

The second adjective means "without spot or blemish." It was used of sacrificial victims. The third means "not to be called to account."¹⁰⁷

These three adjectives give a marvelous picture of complete purity (positive and negative, internal and external).¹⁰⁸

The next verse tells us that our being presented before God in such a condition depends on our continuing in the faith, "grounded and steadfast." It would seem to me that this would imply that these three adjectives apply to a state

¹⁰⁶ Psalm 24:3, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Abbott-Smith, v.s.

¹⁰⁸ Robertson, WP, in loco.

in this life rather than only to our condition after the resurrection. It is by continuing in faith and obedience that we maintain the state described by these terms. Thus we may feel assured that we shall be ready to stand in God's presence.

In the third chapter of Colossians Paul uses language which is strangely akin to that which we found in the sixth and eighth chapters of Romans. In the third verse he says: "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

What does the apostle mean by the statement, "Ye died"? The preceding context would seem to answer the question. In the twentieth verse of the second chapter we find the expression: "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world." This doubtless gives us the clue to the meaning of ἀπεθνήκατε in chapter three.

Apparently, then, Paul is not speaking here of death to sin or self, but rather of death to the past religious life of his readers. They have found in Christ a new sphere of religious reality, in contrast to the formal ritual of the past.

So it is only by accommodation that the statement of 3:3 could be applied to death to sin. A careful exegesis would not support any such interpretation for this passage.

In contrast to the formal, ceremonial holiness of non-Christian religions -- "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch"¹⁰⁹ -- Paul proclaims the moral holiness required by Christianity. This moral holiness is described negatively in verses five to

¹⁰⁹ Col. 2:21.

eleven of chapter three, and positively in verses twelve to seventeen. Negatively, it is purity. Positively, it is love.

The essence of Christian holiness is moral purity. Paul indicates this, negatively, by the command:

Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness.¹¹⁰

A little later, in the eighth verse, he adds to this list, naming some things that are not always catalogued as immoral by the standards of the world:

But now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth.

The reason for their putting to death or putting away these things is explained in verses nine and ten:

Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him.

The expression "the old man," has often been interpreted as meaning the carnal nature, or depravity, which remains in the regenerated individual. It may have that meaning in Romans 6:6, but I hardly see how that interpretation fits here. The verbs "put off" and "put on" carry the figure of a person unclothing and clothing himself. We are to put off the old man as we would lay aside a garment. How this could be said with regard to the carnal nature is difficult to perceive. Does it not rather refer to the putting off of our old habits of life, our old attitudes and desires; in short, our former

¹¹⁰ Col. 3:5.

manner of living? This seems to be the most reasonable interpretation of this passage.

But holiness is not simply the absence of vices; it is also the presence of virtues. There is no such thing as holiness in a vacuum. Holiness is something alive, active. And so Paul declares it to be in verses twelve to seventeen, a part of which we quote:

Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other,.....and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.

That is unquestionably a beautiful picture of a holy life, one that all of us will envy and should imitate. But we do not hesitate to say that no one can live such a life without the ungrieved, unquenched presence of the sanctifying Spirit in his heart.

What is meant by the statement that love is "the bond of perfectness?" Boise suggests that this is the culmination of the figure of putting on clothing.

The entire figure, beginning with *ἐνδύεσθε*, verse 12, is consistent and forcible: thus, put on the various graces mentioned; then, over them, as a band holding them together and in their place, put on Christian love, which is indispensable to perfectness.¹¹¹

Meyer agrees with this view, in opposition to several

¹¹¹ Boise, Notes, in loco.

others which he cites. He says:

Becoming added to all those virtues (regarded as garments), love is to be put on like an upper garment embracing all, because love brings it about that the moral perfection is established in its organic unity as an integral whole. Thus love is the bond of Christian perfection,.....; without love, all the individual virtues, which belong in themselves to that perfection, would not unite together into that necessary harmonious entirety, in which perfection consists.¹¹²

Love is the supreme Christian virtue. Jesus taught this plainly. It was his summary of what God requires of man. Paul emphasized the supremacy of love in that great chapter in First Corinthians. John made love the keynote of his writings, which form the capstone of the New Testament revelation. No wonder that Paul says: "Love...is the bond of perfectness."

To love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as one's self, is the perfection which the new covenant requires, and which the grace and Spirit of Christ work in every sincerely obedient, humble believer; and that very love, which is the fulfilling of the law and the perfection itself which the Gospel requires, is also the bond of that perfection.¹¹³

c. Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians has many parallels in thought and expression to the Colossian letter. Among them we notice one that we have been studying -- the figure of the old man and the new man. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, verses twenty-two to twenty-four Paul uses this figure.

¹¹² Meyer, Commentary, in loco.

¹¹³ Clarke, Commentary, in loco.

That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

It is interesting to note that while the renewing here is progressive and continuous, the putting on of the new man is implied as being a definite act.

When he writes, "that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind," it is a continual rejuvenation that he describes; the verb is present in tense, and the newness implied is that of recency and youth, newness in point of age. But the "new man" to be "put on" is of a new kind and order; and in this instance the verb is of the aorist tense signifying an event, not a continuous act.¹¹⁴

So the putting on of the "new man" is to be a definite act in our lives.

It seems self evident that "old man" and "new man" in this passage refer in general to the old life and the new. But our special interest focuses on the last words of the section quoted -- "holiness of truth."

The word for holiness here (*ὁσιότης*) is found only once elsewhere in the New Testament -- in the song of Zacharias.¹¹⁵ There, as here, it is associated with righteousness. Findlay comments on their meanings as follows:

"Righteousness" is the sum of all that should be in a man's relations towards God's law; "holiness" is a right disposition and bearing towards God Himself.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Findlay, Ephesians, 286.

¹¹⁵ Luke 1:75.

¹¹⁶ Ephesians, 289.

One more passage in Ephesians calls for attention. In the fifth chapter, verses twenty-five and twenty-six, we are told that Christ gave himself for the church

that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word.

There seems to be a reference here to the ancient Oriental custom of "purifying" women in preparation for marriage, such as that described in Esther (2:12). It is there stated that they were to be purified with certain oils and perfumes. It would not seem to be too far-fetched to say that the language of our text means that we are to be purified by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, in preparation for being presented to Christ as His bride. The statement of the next verse -- "that he might present it to himself" -- would certainly lend weight to that interpretation.

This passage tells us that Christ's death was in order to our sanctification. "The sanctification of the Church is the grand purpose of redeeming grace."¹¹⁷

It also states that the sanctification is preceded by a cleansing, "the washing of regeneration." "The Church's purification is antecedent in thought to her sanctification."¹¹⁸ It is the same order as we find in First Corinthians 6:11 -- "Ye were washed, ye were sanctified."

¹¹⁷ Findlay, Ephesians, 369.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 370.

The one who has been washed in regeneration is also to be (subsequently) sanctified. And the verb here is in the aorist tense, which implies a definite act, rather than a prolonged process.

6. The Pastorals

a. First Timothy

Inasmuch as the pastoral epistles deal primarily with practical, rather than doctrinal matters, we shall not expect to find much reference to our subject in them. In fact, in First Timothy we meet a definite mention of the theme only once. In the fifth verse of the fourth chapter, Paul says of meat which is to be eaten: "For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer."

I quote this as another clear instance of the use in the New Testament of the term "sanctify" in a purely formal, impersonal sense. There is no moral connotation in the word as it is employed in this passage. It is obvious that the formal use of the term carried over into the New Testament, along with the new ethical emphasis.

b. Titus

In the second chapter of Titus, verse fourteen, we have another statement as to the purpose of Christ's death:

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

Moffatt translates the last part of this: "and secure himself a clean people with a zest for good works."

But we are interested especially in this passage because of two facts it states. First, it says that we are to be redeemed from all iniquity.

But Christ's death was not alone to redeem us, but also to purify us. And the result of that purifying -- expressed by the aorist, and so a definite act -- is that we thereby become God's "peculiar" people. But "peculiar" in what way? In that we are a people belonging wholly to God.

It seems to me that it is not without significance that in this passage and in the Ephesian description of the Church as the bride of Christ the thought of purifying should be stressed. Can a person truly be said to be God's own possession when he is a slave to sin? We doubt it. It is only when we have been delivered from sin and purified that we become His own entirely. What belongs wholly to Him must be clean.

The last part of the fifth verse of the third chapter has often been quoted as an indication of two works of grace in salvation. It reads:

But according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

I must confess that I cannot see how these two participles can be taken as in any sense implying, to say nothing of "proving," two distinct experiences. The statement "he saved us" uses the aorist tense and evidently refers to conversion. The rest of the verse simply defines the method of that conversion, which reveals its nature. It was a washing away of the stain of sin in the "laver" of regeneration. It was also a renewing of our spiritual life -- until then dead in sin -- by the Holy Spirit.

We have found one passage in Titus, then, which it seems to me emphasizes holiness as Beet interprets its meaning for the Old Testament; that is, as the fact of belonging wholly to God. With it is connected necessarily the idea of cleansing. Then we have found another passage which I believe has been wrongly claimed as a proof-text for two distinct "works of grace." I think that careful study will strengthen the one and eliminate the other, as far as a discussion of sanctification is concerned.

c. Second Timothy

In the ninth verse of the first chapter we read: "Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling."

Robertson thinks that probably "calling" is in the dative case -- "to a holy calling."¹¹⁹ Moffatt agrees, in general, when he translates: "Called us to a life of consecration."

But we have already noted that holiness means more than consecration, although it involves that. It means that what has been consecrated has been purified and made morally clean by the God to whom it now belongs. So that this verse would mean that God saved us and called us to a holy life.

This call to live a holy life, it seems to me, may often come after conversion. At least, it may become much more distinct and definite at a later time. The sinner is concerned mainly with getting rid of the guilt of his sins. He

¹¹⁹ WP, in loco.

is not apt to think much about holiness until after he has become a child of God. Then he feels within him a new nature which has holy aspirations and desires. He now feels definitely the call to live a holy life.

There is one more relevant passage, found in the second chapter, verse twenty-one.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work.

The main emphasis in this passage seems to be on separation from what is unclean. If a person is going to be "sanctified" (perfect passive participle), he must first "cleanse out" of himself the things which would defile. The context would indicate that "these" refers to the vessels of dishonor, mentioned in the previous verse.

We can never divorce the idea of separation from our concept of sanctification. That is evidently its earliest meaning in the Scriptures, and it never loses that as one of its distinctive and essential features. A person must separate himself from sin and the world before he can separate himself unto God. This is the message Paul gives us in his closing epistle.

7. Summary

Inasmuch as our conclusion to this thesis will center largely in Paul's epistles -- since the pressing problems are mostly in the field of Pauline material -- we shall only make a few brief observations at this time.

We have found that Paul gives considerable attention to the subject of sanctification. He discusses it at least once in almost every one of his epistles. In fact, the little personal note to Philemon is the only one of the thirteen Pauline letters in which no passage on this subject was found. And that short letter is practically devoid of any doctrinal teaching whatever.

As might be expected the most doctrinal epistle is the one also which devotes the most space to the theme of sanctification. The book of Romans engaged our attention more extensively and intensively than any of the other twelve epistles. Here we found the most material and also the most difficult problems.

My own impression from investigating the subject of sanctification in the Pauline Epistles is that there are references enough to the subject to satisfy anyone, but that the statements are not as definite and clear as one might sometimes wish they were. It would almost seem at times as though our doctrinal expressions on the subject are more definite than the Scripture themselves.

Bartlett summarizes Paul's teaching on sanctification with these words:

(1) It represents a growth in holiness rather than into holiness out of something else; (2) it is conceived as realizable by a definitive act of faith..., rather than as the cumulative result of a slow, instinctive process after conversion; (3) it is not the same as absolute moral perfection or consummation (τελειοθῆναι), but is rather the prerequisite to its more rapid and steady realization.¹²⁰

I do not think that the matter could be stated much more clearly than that. All three points are essential parts of Paul's doctrine of sanctification.

¹²⁰ Art. "Sanctification," in HDB, IV, 393.

1. THE RELATION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

From beginning to end the Epistle to the Hebrews is saturated with the background and atmosphere of the Old Testament. The author begins with a reference to God's covenant with Israel, and the law which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. He then speaks of the high priest, and the sacrifices which were offered in the sanctuary. The author is clearly familiar with the details of the Old Testament, and he uses them to illustrate his argument. He shows how the Old Testament was a preparation for the New Testament, and how the Old Testament was fulfilled in Christ. He also shows how the Old Testament was a shadow of the things to come, and how the New Testament is the reality. The author's knowledge of the Old Testament is evident throughout the Epistle, and it is one of the main reasons why the Epistle is so interesting and so valuable.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a letter written to Jewish Christians, who were familiar with the Old Testament. The author is not known, but he is clearly a learned man, and he writes in a very elegant and powerful style. The Epistle is divided into four main parts: the first part (chapters 1-3) deals with the superiority of Christ to the angels and to Moses; the second part (chapters 4-10) deals with the superiority of the New Testament to the Old Testament; the third part (chapters 11-12) deals with the lives of the heroes of the Old Testament; and the fourth part (chapter 13) contains practical instructions for the Christians. The Epistle is a masterpiece of Christian literature, and it is one of the most important documents in the New Testament.

And so we shall discover that the Epistle to the Hebrews is a letter written to Jewish Christians, who were familiar with the Old Testament. The author is not known, but he is clearly a learned man, and he writes in a very elegant and powerful style. The Epistle is divided into four main parts: the first part (chapters 1-3) deals with the superiority of Christ to the angels and to Moses; the second part (chapters 4-10) deals with the superiority of the New Testament to the Old Testament; the third part (chapters 11-12) deals with the lives of the heroes of the Old Testament; and the fourth part (chapter 13) contains practical instructions for the Christians. The Epistle is a masterpiece of Christian literature, and it is one of the most important documents in the New Testament.

2. THE FORMAL NAME

In the first chapter, verse 1, the author refers to the Epistle as the "Epistle to the Hebrews". This is the formal name of the Epistle, and it is the name by which it is known in the New Testament. The author also refers to the Epistle as the "Letter to the Hebrews" in chapter 13, verse 24. This is another name for the Epistle, and it is the name by which it is known in the early Christian literature. The Epistle is a letter written to Jewish Christians, and it is one of the most important documents in the New Testament.

1. THE RELATION OF HEBREWS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

From beginning to end the Epistle to the Hebrews is saturated with the background and atmosphere of the Old Testament. The book begins with a reference to God's various methods of revelation before Christ. Quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament are frequent and abundant. Such institutions of the Hebrew religion as sacrifice, the priesthood, and the tabernacle are common figures here. Melchizedec, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Joshua--these are some of the Old Testament characters discussed. And then we come to the eleventh chapter, where we find a veritable galaxy of saints of the old dispensation. And not only are these surface evidences prominent in the book, but the very warp and woof are composed of Old Testament material. This naturally affects the doctrinal point of view.

And so we shall discover that the doctrine of sanctification as it is presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes the formal, as well as the ethical concept. We shall treat these separately, although there is necessarily considerable overlapping.

2. THE FORMAL SENSE

In the ninth chapter, verses thirteen and fourteen, we find a reference to the old ceremonial method of sanctification and the counterpart in the cleansing by the blood of Christ.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

There are two observations which I think may safely be made on this passage. The first is that the Old Testament idea of ceremonial sanctification carried with it the thought of cleansing. It was the water of purification which was used for sanctifying people. So we are not taking undue liberties with the Scriptures when we insist on including the fact of cleansing in our definition of sanctification.

The second observation which we might make is that the New Testament counterpart of this Old Testament act of sanctifying is regeneration. The cleansing of the conscience from dead works would certainly be a part of the experience of conversion. All of which would lead us to state that Christian sanctification begins at conversion. Regeneration is initial sanctification. So this passes over readily to the ethical conception.

3. THE ETHICAL SENSE

In the second chapter and the eleventh verse, we read:

For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.

The present tense is used here for both occurrences of the verb. The literal rendering would be: "both he who is sanctifying and those who are being sanctified."

Clearly there is no emphasis here upon sanctification as an act or event. Rather, it is treated as a process.

The comment of Westcott is pertinent. He says:

The present participles (ἐκκληζόμενοι, ἐπεαροόμενοι) mark the continuous, personal application of Christ's work.¹

The New Testament certainly teaches that sanctification is a process as well as an act. We cannot deny this without closing our eyes to clear teaching of Scripture.

In the tenth verse of the tenth chapter there occurs a statement which is rather difficult of interpretation.

The writer says:

By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

It would seem to me that the basic idea of this verse is that expressed in First Thessalonians 4:3, "This is the will of God, your sanctification". God's will is the first cause, and the death of Christ the procuring cause, of our sanctification.

But it is obvious that the verse means more than that. For it says that "we have been sanctified". It seems to me that the only construction we can put on these words is that every Christian was potentially sanctified in the sacrifice of Christ. In God's will for us, we have been sanctified. It awaits only the answer of our wills to make the potential actual.

¹Westcott, Hebrews, in loco.

There is an evident connection between this verse and John 17:19:

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

The perfect passive participle *ἡγιασμένοι* is used in both passages. Through the sanctification (consecration) of Christ to the will of God in offering Himself for us we are in a state of "having been sanctified."

In the fourteenth verse of this same chapter occurs the statement:

For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

The last word is a present passive participle, as we found in another case above. It is those who are "being sanctified". As Westcott says, it is:

All who from time to time realize progressively in fact that which has been potentially obtained for them.²

But what is the significance of the word "perfected" in this passage? Before answering that question we might note that the term "perfect" is one of the keywords of this epistle. It occurs frequently and significantly. One of the theses of Hebrews is that Judaism did not secure perfection for its adherents, whereas Christianity does.

But what is the connotation of "perfection" in this book? I think we may safely say that it is not primarily moral purity, but rather Christian maturity, which is denoted by this term in Hebrews. It will not be possible for us to discuss this point at length, but we would call attention to the note on "The idea of *τελειώσις* in Westcott's

²Hebrews, in loco.

commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews, page 63. The main point stressed there is that it means: "consummation, bringing to perfection."

In the light of this definition, Westcott's comment on the verse we are studying seems to point out the right interpretation. He says:

The 'offering' of Christ, His perfect life crowned by a willing death, in which He fulfilled the destiny of man and bore the punishment of human sin, is that by and in which every human life finds its consummation.³

That is surely a succinct statement of the meaning of this verse. In and through the life and death of Christ we reach the goal for which we were created. We have formed in us again the image of God by the method indicated by Paul in Second Corinthians 3:18 -- "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."

In the twenty-ninth verse of the tenth chapter we have a reference to "the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified."

That last clause is interesting in the Greek. The words are: ἐν τῇ ἡγιασθῆναι. It is the blood in which he was sanctified.

³Hebrews, in loco.

The blood of Christ is as 'the fountain' in which the sinner is 'plunged' for cleansing.⁴

The verb "sanctified" is in the aorist tense. "The 'Hallowing' of the Christian is spoken of as one definite act."⁴

The use of the aorist and present tenses in Hebrews for the verb *αγιαζεν* differs somewhat from that which some might expect. The present tense is used four times, while the aorist occurs only twice. Once the verb is in the perfect tense. So we may say that the process is emphasized more than the act in Hebrews.

What is the means by which this continued process of sanctifying is carried on? The first part of chapter twelve would seem to give a partial answer. It is accomplished by means of chastening. Our parents chastened us for our good; and God also chastens us for our profit, "that we may be partakers of his holiness."⁵

The thought of being sharers in God's holiness ought to challenge and inspire every Christian. It is in Christ that we become partakers of God's holiness. That is probably the greatest blessing and privilege which is ours "in Christ".

But it is through the long and painful process of "child-training" that we become partakers of this holiness. Discipline is one of the necessary factors in growth in

⁴Westcott, Hebrews, in loco.

⁵Heb. 12:10.

grace. Any teaching on holiness which fails to recognize this truth is bound to lead astray.

We often hear the quotation--almost a misquotation--"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord". Certainly we should study the whole passage to find just what it means. It is found in the fourteenth verse of chapter twelve.

Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord.

The translation "the sanctification" of the Revised is more correct than "holiness", as in the Authorized. The definite article in the Greek is used with it only here and in I Thess. 4:3. On the meaning of the term Westcott writes:

The word *ἁγιασμός* is peculiar to Biblical and Ecclesiastical Greek. It occurs rarely in the LXX.....Perhaps it may be most simply described as the preparation for the presence of God.⁶

This definition is borne out by the idea of sanctification in the Old Testament in several instances. The people were told to sanctify themselves in preparation for the manifestation of God's presence at Sinai. The priests were commanded to be sanctified before approaching the sanctuary where God dwelt.

The primary meaning of our text would seem to be that we are to "pursue" peace with men by seeking to have all our relations with our fellow human beings what they ought to be, and that we are also to engage ourselves diligently in the

⁶Hebrews, in loco.

task of preparing to meet God and stand in His presence. This preparation would certainly include cleansing from sin, but it would also include the cultivation of a closer fellowship with God.

One more passage engages our attention in the study of sanctification in Hebrews. It is found in the thirteenth chapter and the twelfth verse.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate.

The meaning of this passage would seem to be linked with the Old Testament typology which forms the context. Just as on the day of Atonement the high priest took the blood of the slain animal into the Holy of Holies and there made reconciliation for the people, so Christ presented His blood to the Father as an atonement for our sins. And just as the priest sanctified the people by sprinkling the blood on them, so Christ has sanctified His own people with His blood.

The passage at least demonstrates one thing, without question. The death of Christ on the cross was not only for our justification, but also for our sanctification. We cannot effect our own sanctification through self-discipline or by an endless accumulation of good works. Self-sanctification is just as impossible as self-justification. We are just as dependent on the sacrifice of Christ for our sanctification as for our justification.

4. SUMMARY

The background of the idea of sanctification in the Epistle to the Hebrews is to be found in the institutions and types of the Old Testament. Hence an essential emphasis is placed upon the formal concept of being set apart, or consecrated, to God.

But we have seen also that that same Old Testament background carries us beyond the mere idea of consecration to that of cleansing. For the people of Israel were sanctified by the sprinkling of the blood and the water of purification. Hence we must include the idea of cleansing in our concept of sanctification.

We have also discovered that there is more emphasis in Hebrews on progressive sanctification than on sanctification conceived as an act or event. The Christian life should be a continuous process of being sanctified. Any failure to realize the need of a continual and increasing sanctifying of our whole personality--our thoughts, affections, desires, and motives--must inevitably result in stagnation and death. As has been pointed out, we do not grow into holiness, but we need continually to grow in it.

We close our study of Hebrews with a quotation from Westcott on the meaning of the verb ἁγιάζω. He writes:

The sense of "holy" (ἅγιος) is derived from the highest application of the word to God Himself. God is spoken of as 'holy' under the aspect of His inviolable purity, majesty, awe-inspiring glory. Those who are devoted to Him that they

may reflect His character are holy (*ἅγιος*). That is hallowed which is made to minister to the manifestations of His glory.

Hence generally *ἁγιασμεν* has two main senses:

- (1) To set apart for God: to separate from 'the world'
- (2) To make conformable in character to such a dedication.⁷

⁷Hebrews, 346.

CHAPTER V

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

1. The Epistle of James.

There does not appear to be any passage in James relating definitely to the subject of sanctification. The adjective "perfect" (τέλειος) is used several times. It occurs twice in the fourth verse of the first chapter.

Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

It is obvious that James is not speaking here of a perfection which is attainable in an instant, but of one which is the result of continued patience, or endurance. Huther defines τέλειος as "that which has attained its aim."¹ Lange says that it denotes "perfection in the sense of completed development or vitality".² James is evidently speaking here of that ultimate perfection which is the goal of the Christian life.

It would seem that the same meaning attaches to the word "perfect" in the second verse of the third chapter, where we read:

For in many things we all stumble. If any man stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.

It seems to me very apparent that James is here denying the possibility that any man can live an absolutely perfect life. All of us "stumble", especially in the words

¹Meyer's Commentary, in loco.

²Lange's Commentary, in loco.

we say. Any claim to perfection of conversation is fanaticism.

2. THE EPISTLES OF PETER

a. First Peter. Peter addresses his First Epistle "to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion", and then he further defines their election as being:

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

This passage furnishes an interesting description of the function of each member of the Trinity in the matter of our salvation. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all have a vital role in the great drama of human redemption.

It is evident that the phrase, "sanctification of the Spirit", does not apply to any one experience or stage in the Christian life. Lange well observes:

This expression comprises all the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost, from His first gentle knockings to the sealing of grace.³

Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, wrote this epistle primarily to Jews. This fact should doubtless be taken into consideration in interpreting the meaning of language which has a Jewish background.

This would seem to be the case in that very emphatic charge which he gives in the first chapter, verses fifteen

³Commentary, in loco.

and sixteen. After warning them against allowing their former ungodly desires to influence their Christian life, he says:

But like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, ye shall be holy, for I am holy.

. Fortunately, the kind of holiness required is defined for us in this particular passage. Because we belong to a holy God, we must be holy "in all manner of living".

The fact of belonging to God involves as a matter of duty the necessity of a holy walk.⁴

It is evident that Peter's main concern in this epistle is with the conduct of the Christian believer. He does not deal here with the inward, heart struggle for deliverance from the power of sin, as Paul does in Romans. Rather, he emphasizes the need for a holy walk, as befits those who belong to God.

The fact that Peter has an Old Testament background for his conception of Christian holiness is indicated definitely in the two other passages of this epistle where the term "holy" occurs. In the fifth verse of the second chapter he speaks of his readers as being "a holy priesthood". In the ninth verse of the same chapter he calls them: "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession."

⁴Meyer's Commentary, in loco.

As we have said, both of these passages emphasize the Old Testament conception of holiness. The priests were holy because they were separated to God's service. And "a holy nation" is further explained as meaning "a people for God's own possession". In other words, God's ownership appears to be the central idea in Peter's conception of holiness.

The verb "sanctify" occurs once in this epistle, in the third chapter, verse fifteen--"But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord".

The meaning of this somewhat enigmatical statement would seem to be indicated by the previous verse, where Peter exhorts the suffering Christians not to fear their tormenters. Rather, he now says, they are to have a holy fear and reverence for Christ, acknowledging Him as Lord, the One who has a right to rule their hearts and lives. A reverent fear of Christ will save them from the fear of men.

It seems to me evident that we cannot look to Peter's First Epistle for any added light on the subject of Christian sanctification. There is a very definite emphasis here upon the need for holiness, as definite as will be found anywhere in the New Testament. But we have seen that it is an Old Testament type of holiness, primarily. Peter exhorts us to be holy, but he does not discuss the method of attainment or attainment.

b. Second Peter. Turning to Peter's Second Epistle

we find much the same attitude toward holiness as in the first letter. He speaks of the "holy mount", the "holy commandment", the "holy prophets". And then, near the close of his epistle he reminds them of what manner of persons they ought to be "in all holy living and godliness".⁵

It was the relationship of the mount and of the commandment to God which made them "holy". The mount of transfiguration was holy because God's presence was manifested there in an unusual way. The commandment was holy because it emanated from God. And the prophets were holy primarily because they were chosen of God and inspired by His Spirit for their particular task of proclaiming His message to men.

As in the first epistle, we find here an emphasis upon "holy living". The outward life of the Christian is to give evidence of the fact that he belongs to God. But this is only possible as the result of the sanctifying influence of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts. Peter, however, seems rather to assume, than to state, this important truth.

So here again we find the Old Testament conception dominating the apostle's thinking. It is what we should expect from Peter, as his attitude is revealed in Acts and Galatians.

3. THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

The close relationship between Second Peter and Jude

51:18; 2:21; 3:2; 3:11.

in the matter of apocalypticism has been emphasized a great deal by modern Bible students. But it seems to me that the common conception of holiness in the two epistles ascribed to Peter is almost as striking as the other phenomenon--although not as extensive--and should be allowed to have its place as one factor in deciding the problem of the authorship of Second Peter.

For while Second Peter and Jude do agree in their apocalyptic emphasis, there is not in the latter the same attention to the idea of holiness which there is in the former.

Jude has one instance of the use of the term "holy". In the twentieth verse the writer refers to the "most holy faith".

"Faith" here is taken as objective by Huth, as subjective by Lange.⁶ Whichever way it is taken, the adjective "most holy" would apply. It seems to me that the context would favor the latter interpretation. For he describes the manner of their building up themselves in their own Christian experience.

"Holy" in this passage is to be taken as denoting relationship to God, whatever be the interpretation accepted for faith. God is the source both of our Christian faith, objectively considered, and of faith as conceived as an attitude of the heart.

⁶See Meyer's and Lange's Commentaries, in loco.

4. SUMMARY

What we have said about First Peter might be applied to this general group of epistles treated in this chapter. The main emphasis seems to be practical, rather than doctrinal, and in every one of these four epistles the Old Testament background is not only apparent, but dominant. This general point of view is clearly exhibited in the conception of holiness in these writings.

So we shall still have to fall back on Paul for any clear doctrinal definition of Christian sanctification. The General Epistles contribute in the way of emphasis upon the idea and necessity of holiness. But they do not shed much light on the problems which we are facing in this thesis.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

1. THE FIRST EPISTLE

The keynotes of John's first epistle are the positive facts of love, life, light, faith, assurance. But there is also a strong emphasis on the negative fact of sin. Sin cannot be ignored in the search for life and love. Sin is a disease and must be eliminated if there is to be health.

In the last four verses of the first chapter of First John we have one of the most important passages on sin in the New Testament. We shall quote it, in order that we might examine it carefully.

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

The first thing we notice is the statement that the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from all sin. Westcott comments on this:

The thought here is of 'sin' and not of 'sins': of the spring, the principle, and not of the separate manifestations.¹

¹Westcott, Epistles of John, in loco.

Ἐάν τις ἐν τῇ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῇ φωτὶ, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας. Ἐάν εἰπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐχ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐχ ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν. Ἐάν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος, ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας. Ἐάν εἰπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἁμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐχ ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν.

So the promise is that God will cleanse us from all the principle of sin in our natures. And the fact is repeated in the ninth verse, where it is said that He will "cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Westcott contends that there is no promise that God will do this in the present life of the believer. But I do not see how this corresponds with the use of the present tense in verse seven. He "cleanseth" us, continually, from all sin. How this can be projected in to sometime at or after death is difficult to see.

On the other hand, verse nine speaks of a cleansing which is expressed by the aorist tense. So it would seem that the cleansing from all sin is both an act and a process--that we are at some time cleansed from all unrighteousness and then that we are continually cleansed from all sin as we continue walking in the light. Westcott makes the terms "sin" and "unrighteousness" here synonymous.

With regard to the meaning of this cleansing, Huther writes that the phrase at the end of verse seven may mean:

Either the cleansing from guilt, i.e., the forgiveness of sins, or cleansing from sin itself, its eradication....According to ver. 9, where ἐφίναται ἁμαρτίας and καθαίρεται πάντες αἰσυχάς are placed together, and thus distinguished from one another, the second view must be regarded as the correct one, as indeed the context also demands.²

It is interesting to note that Huther uses the term "eradication" which has caused so much disputing. While

²Meyer's Commentary, in loco.

the word is not found in Scripture, yet cleansing from all sin means nothing less than that. And certainly the writer of this epistle postulates such an experience in this life. Adam Clarke writes on this point:

And being cleansed from all sin is what every believer should look for, what he has a right to expect, and what he must have in this life, in order to be prepared to meet his God.³

John Wesley's favorite name for entire sanctification comes from the First Epistle of John. In the fifth verse of the second chapter we read the statement:

Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected.

It is very evident from this verse that the presence of God's love in our hearts is dependent upon our obedience of God's word. Westcott is correct when he writes:

The perfection of love is conditioned by the completeness of obedience.⁴

The only way that we can be filled with the love of God is to surrender our wills wholly to God's will. This experience of perfect love is maintained by our keeping his word.

There is another statement in this epistle about the same experience. In the seventeenth verse of the fourth chapter, we read: "Herein is love made perfect with us."

³Commentary, in loco.

⁴Epistles of John, in loco.

And then the expression "perfect love" itself occurs in the next verse:

There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.

God has not promised us in His Word that we shall ever in this life become perfect in judgment or in conduct. But He has offered to make us perfect in love, if we will obey Him fully.

It seems to me obvious that the perfection in love here postulated as possible is qualitative, rather than quantitative. It is perfection in kind, rather than in degree.

There is still another reference to perfect love in this epistle. In the twelfth verse of the fourth chapter, the writer says:

If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us.

It is evident that the idea of perfect love is basic in this epistle. While Paul stresses faith, John especially emphasizes love.

We are sometimes told that we must sin in word, thought, and deed every day. But that is certainly not what John teaches us. He says, in the sixth verse of the third chapter:

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him.

And again in the ninth verse, he becomes even more emphatic:

Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.

In all fairness, however, it should be recognized that John is not speaking here of the experience of a special group of Christians. Everyone who is begotten of God, or converted, is not to sin. Sinlessness should be the state of all Christians.

The tense of "sinneth" (ἁμαρτάνει) is present (progressive)--"does not go on sinning." In I John 2:1 the use of the aorist allows the possibility of an act of sin in the Christian life. Here the present excludes the habit of sinning.

2. THE GOSPEL

In the great High Priestly prayer that Jesus prayed for His own, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, a dominant petition is for the sanctification of His disciples. Here are Jesus' words to the Father:

Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth..
...And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that
they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.⁵

It is evident from this passage that sanctification is more than the consecrating of ourselves to God. It is the work of God in our hearts. Jesus asked the Father to sanctify His disciples.

The request is placed in the aorist tense. We have already seen that the aorist implies, though it does not prove, momentary action.

⁵John 17:17, 19.

Another observation that needs to be made is that Christ here declared that He sanctified Himself. Clearly, His sanctification did not include cleansing, for He had no sin from which to be cleansed. In His case it meant consecration, probably to the cross as the necessary means of the sanctification of His disciples. But we cannot ignore the argument that the term "sanctify" should be interpreted the same way in both places in this passage.

3. THE APOCALYPSE

As might be expected from the nature of this book, there is little here about personal sanctification. The term saints does occur some thirteen times. The adjective "holy" is twice applied to God, once by Himself.⁶

In the last chapter and the eleventh verse there is a call to holiness in view of the imminent return of Christ.

He that is holy, let him be made holy still
(yet more, mg.)

This would seem to indicate progression in holiness as a necessary preparation for the second coming. It recognizes the fact that some have been made holy, but exhorts them to become yet more holy.

The contrast of "holy" with "filthy" in this passage would certainly preclude any idea of limiting the word "holy" here to "consecrated". If it is opposite to filthy, it must have in it the thought of purity, of cleansing from pollution.

So the last reference to sanctification in the New

Testament emphasizes definitely the idea of moral purity. Sanctification has ethical content as well as a formal meaning. It will take more than a formal consecration to fit us for fellowship with a holy God.

4. SUMMARY

It is apparent that John does not discuss so definitely as Paul the manner by which we are delivered from sin. But we have seen that he does emphasize cleansing from all sin.

Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples, but there is no clear indication in the passage as to the manner in which this sanctification is to take place.

It is in the first epistle that we found most of our material for the contribution of the Johannine writings. And here the main emphasis was on cleansing from sin and perfection in love. But while John is simple and brief, it seems that he has given us in these two thoughts the heart of the true doctrine of sanctification. It is essentially the love of God in a pure heart. That was the emphasis of John Wesley throughout the years of his ministry.

Part Two: Conclusions

PART THREE

CONCLUSION

1. THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The term "sanctify" does not occur in the Synoptics. Yet the idea of sanctification seems implicit in John the Baptist's statement concerning Christ: "He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire."¹

The teaching of Jesus on sanctification, as recorded in the Synoptics, is indicated clearly in the Sermon on the Mount. The Christian is to be "perfect".² This perfection is defined in the sermon as consisting of sincerity, simplicity, and singleness of purpose. It is a perfection of motive, of attitude, of thought. It begins with humility and ends with fidelity, as indicated in the beatitudes. It includes kindness, chastity, truthfulness, and love for all--this we find in the last half of Matthew five.

The main emphasis of Jesus' teaching, as given in the Synoptic Gospels, is ethical. It is entirely natural, then, that the ethical, rather than theological, phase of sanctification should be stressed here.

It is obvious that one of the main factors in this teaching is the attitude of the Christian himself. It is required of him, above all else, that he shall maintain the right attitude toward God and toward his fellowman.

¹Matt. 3:11

²Matt. 5:48

2. ACTS

While the book of Acts lays strong emphasis on the experience of being filled with the Spirit; it does not have much to say definitely on the subject of sanctification. There is much illustration in Acts of the Spirit-filled life, but not much express teaching as to the nature of sanctification.

One of the most significant passages is found in Peter's speech at the Jerusalem Council. Here³ he seems to identify the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the purifying of the heart. If this identity is allowed, then all the occasions reported in Acts of the coming of the Holy Spirit on individuals or groups would have direct reference to the subject of sanctification.

In the absence of any other specific references in the book of Acts to the cleansing of the heart in connection with the baptism with the Holy Spirit, perhaps the most reasonable position to take is that the emphasis of Acts is on being filled with the Spirit rather than on sanctification.

3. THE PAULINE EPISTLES

In the Thessalonian epistles, which are primarily practical rather than doctrinal, there are several striking passages on sanctification. Especially is this true of First Thessalonians 5:23, where Paul prays that God may

³Acts 15:8,9.

"sanctify you wholly." The language used here indicates that sanctification is intended to be thorough. It is to affect the entire personality.

The relation of sanctification to purity is emphasized in another passage, often quoted because of its definite statement: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."⁴ One of the purposes of sanctification as indicated by the context, is to enable the Christian to live a life of moral purity in a pagan environment.

The fact that consecration is one meaning of sanctification seems to be illustrated in the first Corinthian letter, where Paul speaks of the Christians at Corinth as "sanctified in Christ Jesus."⁵ They were sanctified only because they belonged to Him and were united to Him. This ownership extends to the body, which is "the temple of the Holy Spirit."⁶ It is evident that any professed sanctity of life which is accompanied by a disparagement of bodily cleanliness is contrary to Scripture.

The relation of sanctification to cleansing is stated in a passage in Second Corinthians (7:1): "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The cleansing is pre-requisite to the perfecting of holiness.

⁴I Thess. 4:3.

⁵I Cor. 1:2.

⁶I Cor. 6:19.

In Galatians and Romans there is much emphasis on what might be called the negative side of sanctification. Paul speaks of having been crucified,⁷ of dying to sin,⁸ of the old man having been crucified and the body of sin being done away.⁹

Certainly such language bespeaks the elimination of sin in the heart and life of the believer. Paul believed that the Christian life should include death to sin.

It must be recognized that these are strong terms. Paul did not favor the use of mild methods and partial measures in the treatment of sin. He prescribed death by destruction. The body of sin was to be done away with.

It would seem that one could hardly come away from the study of Paul's epistles without at least the conviction that the apostle looked on sin as something serious--in fact, fatal. It was a question of sin being destroyed in us, or else of the sin in us destroying us. There could be no compromise.

But this death to sin and destruction of sin is to be accomplished by the positive experience of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit.¹⁰ Paul does not leave us in the sixth and seventh chapters of Romans. He carries us on into the eighth chapter with its striking message of

⁷Gal. 2:20

⁸Rom. 6:2.

⁹Rom. 6:6.

¹⁰Gal. 5:25.

victorious living in the power of the Spirit.

Sanctification, then, means the destruction of the sin within us, that we may be freed to live a life of spiritual freedom and victory. This is made possible by walking in fellowship with, and under the dominant influence of, the Spirit of God. Only thus is the sanctified life actually realized.

In his prison epistles Paul emphasizes the fact that God's plan is for the Christian to be presented "holy and without blemish and unreprouvable" before Him.¹¹ When we meet God that must be our condition. The purpose of the Christian life in this world is to prepare us for that meeting.

The teaching of Paul in his epistles contains a great deal of emphasis upon moral purity; but sanctification does not stop there. The believer must not only put off the deeds of the former life; he must also put on lowliness, longsuffering, love, and other Christian virtues. Love is the "bond of perfectness."¹²

It is evident, then, that Paul agrees with John in making love the essence of Christian perfection. Sanctification means Christ-likeness; and Christ-likeness means love, for God is love.

The picture of the Christian life which is given in

¹¹Col. 1:22.

¹²Col. 3:5-17.

the prison epistles is that of an experience on a high plane of spiritual living. It is a life lived in fellowship with Christ through His indwelling Spirit.

The fact that sanctification involves separation is emphasized in the words of Paul to Timothy:

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use.¹³

4. THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

While the background of Hebrews is largely the religion of the Old Testament, with the result that there is considerable emphasis upon formal sanctification, yet there is also definite teaching on ethical sanctification.

The outstanding fact discovered in our study of Hebrews is that a larger place is given to progressive sanctification than to the crisis experience. The aorist tense of *ἐποίησεν* is used only twice, while the present occurs four times. The process is emphasized more than the act.

The object of Hebrews is to get the Christians to go on, rather than to slip back. God desires that His children shall grow up. Maturity, rather than purity, is the main emphasis here.

5. THE GENERAL EPISTLES

The main emphasis of this group of writings is prac-

¹³II Tim. 2:21.

tical, rather than doctrinal. Peter exhorts the Christian to live a life of holy conduct. The Old Testament background is strong in these epistles, so there is not much contribution here to our study.

6. THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

There are two main emphases in John's First Epistle relative to the subject of sanctification. The first is on cleansing from all sin.¹⁴ The second is on perfect love.¹⁵ It might also be said that we find here the strongest teaching on sinless perfection in the New Testament:

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not.....Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him.....Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God.¹⁶

There is obviously no place for sinning in the normal Christian life. The Christian is expected to be cleansed from all sin and to be made perfect in love. This is John's teaching.

7. FINAL SUMMARY

The only section of the New Testament which has much direct teaching on the experience of sanctification is the Pauline corpus. The book of Acts has been used a great deal as the basis for sermons on entire sanctification. But care-

¹⁴I John 1:7,9.

¹⁵I John 2:5; 4:17.

¹⁶I John 5:18; 3:6,9.

ful examination indicates that while the main emphasis of Acts is on being filled with the Holy Spirit, yet there is very little doctrinal reference to sanctification in the book. It is often assumed that sanctification and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are identical experiences. But there are very few statements in the New Testament which assert that identity with any degree of definiteness. To say that the one hundred and twenty in the day of Pentecost, the group in the house of Cornelius, or the dozen or so men at Ephesus were "sanctified" is certainly to read one's own theology into the statements in Acts. The author of that book states of these, as of others also, that they were "filled with the Holy Spirit." But he nowhere says that they were "sanctified". Our use of that language is not derived from Acts but from the epistles of Paul.

In the Pauline letters, especially in Galatians and Romans, there is much emphasis upon death to sin. But the term sanctification does not occur in these connections with any degree of frequency.

Perhaps the most definite linking of the negative and positive aspects of sanctification is to be found in the prison epistles of Paul. Here the cleansing and the sanctifying are in closer proximity.¹⁷

It is evident that God designs that we should be cleansed from all sin and filled with the Holy Spirit. These

¹⁷Eph. 5:26, for example.

are plain, definite Scriptural assertions. It might save some argument if the truths of Scripture were presented in the language of the Scriptures themselves, without asserting positively certain identifications which are not clearly declared in the New Testament.

8. CONCLUSION

Our study of the subject of sanctification in the New Testament would seem to me to point out two main facts concerning it. The first is that sanctification is both a crisis and a process. The crisis consists of death to sin, of cleansing from all sin, and is accomplished by the infilling with the Holy Spirit, as the result of a complete consecration to the will of God.

But sanctification is also a process. The thoughts and feelings, the motives and desires of the Christian are to be sanctified continually by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart. This sanctification is to be gradual and progressive, both before and after the crisis of full surrender.

The second main fact is that the term "perfection" in the New Testament has primarily the idea of maturity. However, it should also be recognized that John in his First Epistle speaks of having been made perfect in love, as just noted above. Evidently this is an experience which is possible in this life. God's will is that the Christian should be cleansed from all sin, filled with the Spirit, and thus made perfect in love.

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